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VIETNAM

10-2017

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(Read her story on page 40)
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FORK / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

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GASTRONOMY

Seafood Buffet by River

Nestled under a shaded tropical canopy, Tram's Cookery features Monthly Seafood Buffet Night highlighting the theme of fresh seafood and assortment dishes from Vietnamese and Asian cuisine by overlooking the peaceful Saigon River

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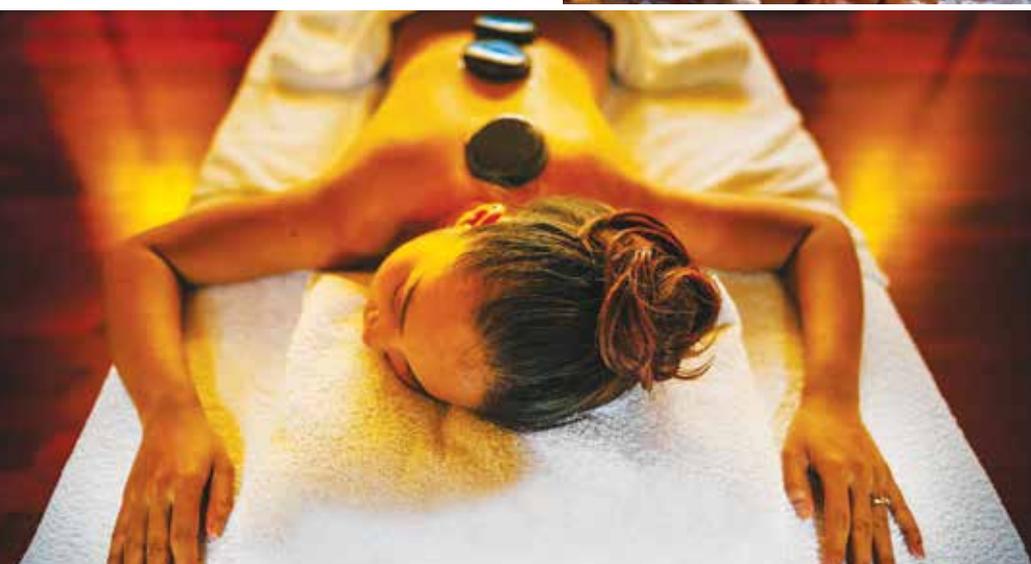
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Datebook

What's on this month...

OCTOBER 16-26

What: Vietnam Noble Bicycle Challenge 2017

Where: Throughout Vietnam

About: The Christina Noble Children's Foundation (a member of AusCham) is inviting you on a 10-day Noble Challenge Cycle adventure from North to South Vietnam. Join them for a 425km challenge to help break the cycle of poverty. The cycling challenge, starting in Hanoi, will take you through some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world, visiting the remote Hill Tribes of Sapa, visit the unique caves of Tranh An, cycling through paddy fields, ancient cities, along stunning coastlines, rural villages and immerse yourself in the culture of Vietnam. Take part in this adventure challenge, which makes a direct impact on the lives of thousands of vulnerable children.

Contact: Visit www.auschamvn.org for more info

OCTOBER 21

What: Frédégonde

Where: Saigon Opera House (2 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm; tickets start at VND200,000

About: Moving forward is the long-awaited Frédégonde by Camille Saint-Saens, a collaboration with La Fabrique Opera, stage managed by Dan Arama, directed by Caroline Blanpied

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and music by HBSO Symphony Orchestra conducted by Patrick Souillot. The drama lyrique in five acts was composed partially in the island of Con Dao, Vietnam, during one of the composer's exotic travels, to a libretto by Louis Gallet, finishing an unfinished opera of the same name by Ernest Guiraud. The character of Frédégonde, Frankish queen, is originally a serving-woman, who inspired the Frankish king, Chilperic I., with a violent passion. At her instigation he repudiated his first wife Audovera, and strangled his second, Galswintha, Queen Brunhilda's sister. A few days after this murder Chilperic married Frédégonde. Frédégonde has traditionally been given a very bad reputation, foremost by the accounts of Gregory of Tours, who depicts her as ruthlessly murderous and sadistically cruel, and she is known for the many cruel stories about her, particularly for her long going feud with queen Brunhilda of Austrasia. This historical backdrop will serve audiences with an emotional thriller of varying degrees.

Contact: Call 090 360 4539 for more info


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OCTOBER 21

What: WeRace

Where: Phu My Hung, D1

About: Twenty-one kilometers that you will have to run as a team. Teams will be composed of four members and each will have to run 5.25km. Only by running together, will you complete the half marathon and cross the finish line? The event welcomes corporate groups, families and friends to come and experience a friendly race as well as other team activities on the day. A great and memorable day out that will bring your crew closer.

Contact: Visit werace.vn for more info



OCTOBER 22

What: The Vietnam Web Summit

Where: Visit website for location

About: This year's event expects to attract nearly 7,000 visitors and more than 200 enterprises nationwide. Not just domestic companies such as FPT, VNG, VinCommerce and VCCorp, but global corporations like Google and Microsoft will also participate in the event. In addition, topics on information security, payment and banking security, social networks, digital marketing and search engine optimization will be discussed.

Contact: Visit <https://vietnamwebsummit.com/en/homepage/> for more info



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OCTOBER 26

What: Vietnam Solar Energy Summit 2017

Where: Rex Hotel (141 Nguyen Hue, D1); 8am-5:30pm

About: Vietnam Solar Energy Summit 2017 combines conference, exhibition, project match-making forum, and exclusive networking sessions creating a perfect platform, a one-stop business match for all concerned industrial players to share knowledge and to expand business contacts in this emerging market. What VSES 2017 can provide is not only the stage to understand the market intelligence, but also to get connected with potential local partners and leads of advanced stage solar projects in Vietnam.

Contact: For more info, email Mr. Hanzo Zhang via hanzo.zhang@neoventurecorp.com

OCTOBER 27

What: Heart Beat Presents Birth of Frequency /Construct Re-Form

Where: Check website for location; 9pm till late; free until 10pm, VND150,000 after

About: Nostalgic of the Techno of the nineties, Birth of Frequency aims, through music, to express certain thoughts and abstract feelings. First (and always) a DJ, he questions himself in order to deliver services and productions that are increasingly more personal and refined. Each record is an interaction with the others—they each bring a part of the story that Birth of Frequency wants to tell.

Contact: Email info@heartbeatsaigon.com for more info



OCTOBER 27&28

What: Hatch! Fair The Fifth

Where: White Palace (194 Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan); 8am-11am

About: With the concept of "See the Unseen," Hatch! Fair The Fifth promises new approaches to the startup ecosystem by bringing up untold stories from not only ecosystem builders but also startups and investors in a national and international scale through a trip from Hanoi, to Danang, then HCMC. In addition, Hatch! Battle, the annual startup competition, will hold its semi-final pitching event to select best companies in the final round in HCMC.

Contact: Visit fair.hatch.vn for more info

OCTOBER 29

What: A VIETNAM – US MUSIC NIGHT

Where: Saigon Opera House (2 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm; tickets start at VND200,000

About: The HCMC's Vietnam – US Friendship Association with the return of the acclaimed violinist Vu Viet Chuong. The richly diverse repertoire will surely win audiences' hearts with works ranging from *Candide*, Leonard Bernstein's operetta and adaptation of Voltaire's work, a series of movie themes such as Theme and Fantasy from movie *Ladies in Lavender* by Nigel Hess (made famous by Joshua Bell's talent), *Remembrances* from movie *Schindler's List* by John Williams (made famous by famed violinist Itzhak Perlman), *Tango* from *Scent of a Woman* by Carlos Gardel. The second part will feature Sergei Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 in E Minor, op. 27, delivered together with HBSO Symphony Orchestra and batoned by Hector Guzman.

Contact: Call 090 360 4539 for more info



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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



~43

HECTARES OF FOREST IN SOUTH-CENTRAL VIETNAM

have disappeared last month for unknown reasons, and local authorities have yet to find out an explanation. Officers from the district's forest protection office noticed the situation when they were patrolling a part of the woods in An Hung Commune, located in An Lao.

"Some sections of the destroyed woods were protection forest while the others were zoned for industrial activities," an official stated. Such a large area of forest must take a long time to be chopped down, leading to the question of why local authorities and forest rangers were not aware of the destruction.

According to Chairman Nam, the road running to the part of the forest is quite rough, which might be one reason why the deforestation had not been detected. "It is now urgent to stop the deforestation and hunt for the culprits," Nam asserted. "After that the oversight and responsibility of any competent agency or individual will be taken into account."

300

FARMERS WERE HONORED LAST MONTH FOR ACHIEVING

excellent results in the manufacture and trade of agricultural products and for creating thousands of jobs. Speaking at the event, Lai Xuan Mon, chairman of the Vietnam Farmers' Union, said, "Over the past five years, many farmers have actively been studying and applying scientific and technical advances for high economic efficiency." Some 165,000 households earned a yearly income of VND500 million - VND1 billion and over 27,000 made over VND1 billion, five times more than that seen in the 2007-2012 period, he said. Good farming households have also generated jobs for over 11 million laborers. Of these, more than 3.5 million farmers were provided with regular jobs and over 7 million with seasonal ones. This has helped over 200,000 farmers come out of poverty. "The Farmers' Association should help members with rural economic restructuring so that they can benefit from industrialization, modernization and international economic integration," he said. On this occasion, 20 farmers were given Labor Order, third class, while 69 others were presented with a Certificate of Merit in recognition of their successful agricultural production and farming.



111

SET TO BE NATIONAL HOTLINE FOR CHILD PROTECTION.

Telephone hotline No. 111 has been regulated as the National Child Protection Hotline and is expected to be put into service in December. When it comes into operation, there will be three consulting stations in Hanoi, Da Nang and An Giang, whereby the Hanoi call center connects and handles consultations for 28 provinces and cities in the North, while Da Nang handles calls from 16 provinces in Central Vietnam and the Central Highlands, and An Giang serves 19 provinces and cities in the South. Since 2004, Vietnam has used a telephone hotline for advising and supporting children at 1800.1567. Currently, the Child Counseling and Support Line 1800.1567, by the Department of Child Care and Protection, has been in operation for 13 years and is free of charge, receiving over 2.5 million calls across the country. To make it easy to remember and respond in the case of an emergency, the around the clock 111 hotline has been set up, alongside other emergency numbers, such as 113, 114 and 115.



255 TOURIST BEACH HOUSES TO BE CLEARED ON CO TO ISLAND.

Authorities in Quang Ninh said locals illegally built the beach houses. According to Party Secretary and Chairman of the Co To District People's Committee, the 225 huts were built a long time ago by 36 local households on military land and had no construction licenses. In a recent visit to the island, the Secretary requested the district authorities to remove the huts and reclaim the land. Apparently each house cost around VND120 million to build. Vu Thanh Minh, who started the idea of building the beach houses, said he built the first set of huts four years ago with the aim to offer visitors to the island a new experience. "The huts immediately attracted lots of tourists. They're convenient and all have a beautiful view of the beach," Minh said. "Many other people followed me to build new huts, however, the large number of houses has affected the environment." The businessman said that most of the investors were aware of their violations and the negative effect that their projects have on the environment and had agreed to demolish them. Nam also said that the district people's committee will try to minimize the losses for these investors and help them find new business opportunities.



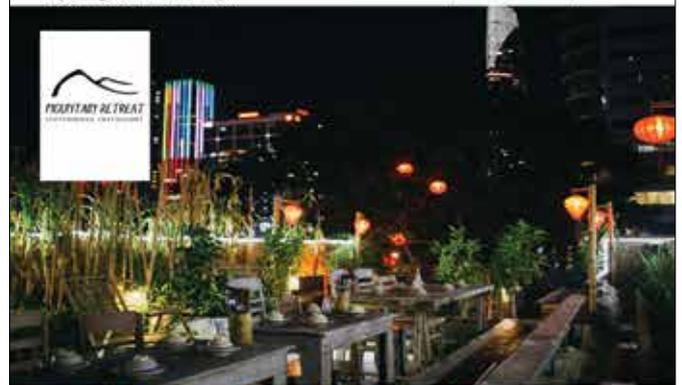
50% OF LOCALS HOLDING PHDS IN VIETNAM ARE CIVIL SERVANTS WORKING AT STATE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES.

According to Nguyen Van Nam from the Vietnam Trade Institute, the proportion was 70 percent two to three years ago. Vietnam has 11,000 professors and associate professors, but only 4,440, or 40 percent, work as lecturers. There are 24,000 PhDs, with only 16,514 working as lecturers. Vo Kim Son, from the National Academy of Public Administration, said the high percentage of PhDs and professors working in state agencies can explain why Vietnam is among the countries with the highest number of PhDs in the region, but with the lowest number of research works. The figures show that lecturing and carrying out research is not considered a critical task for professors and PhDs. He said that Vietnam is among very few countries with such high numbers of PhDs and professors working in state management. However, in their development strategies, local authorities still strive for 100 percent of civil servants with a doctorate.



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THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

Asian Tour Heads Back To Ho Tram

Officials at The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip have announced that the Asian Tour will return to Vietnam's most acclaimed golf facility in 2018 and 2019. The Ho Tram Players Championship will take place December 6-9 next year, and with a follow up event to be scheduled in 2019

In 2015, the links-style layout on Vietnam's south-central coast staged the Ho Tram Open, which was won by reigning Masters Champion Sergio Garcia and voted 'Event of the Year' by Asian Tour members.

"The Ho Tram Open was a huge success," said Michael Kelly, Executive Chairman and CEO of Asian Coast Development Ltd. (ACDL), developer of the Ho Tram Strip. "It's time for some of the world's best golfers to come back to Ho Tram, and for us to once again show the world how spectacular The Bluffs and the country of Vietnam are."

The Bluffs is located less than two hours by car from Ho Chi Minh City and is part of the blossoming Ho Tram Strip, a multi-billion-dollar integrated resort

Cycling For A Good Cause

Mekong Quilts has partnered successfully with AIA and Social Bikes, as well as KOTO, for an unusual teambuilding event: 73 people cycled across the city on bamboo bikes. Most were not used to cycling at all, and the HCMC traffic was an added adventure. Mekong Quilts provided the bamboo bikes. AIA made a donation for Mekong Quilts-supported projects: scholarships for the poorest children, training to increase income, and more.

Previously 85 staff from BNP Paribas bank also bamboo-biked in the Mekong Delta. Mekong Quilts believes development works when all people join hands: Business companies and social enterprise together. In October another group will come from France, and in December two groups from France. Every year an estimated VND2 billion is raised for the projects. Contact Bernard Kervyn at bernard.kervyn@mekongplus.org for more info.



The Royal Treatment For Pets

Bed and Pet-first Villa (14A6 Thao Dien, D2) has launched its new Royal Room to meet customers' needs. In the Royal Room, pets can enjoy pampered services that include: two meals a day, air conditioning with air purifier, music, walks and play time twice a day, a private couch, an iPad to watch television, a private camera so owners can see and talk with their pets via a smartphone. The room is about 3sqm and housed in the east wing so pets can sunbathe every morning. In addition, owners can expect trained professional staff and an in-house vet caring for their furbabies.



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CRICKET NOISIES

A heartwarming story of Vietnam's underdog cricket team and its coach

Text by **Wes Grover**
Images by **@elblinko**

WHEN THE MALAYSIAN

Organizing Committee announced that the sport of cricket would be included in the 2017 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in Kuala Lumpur, it meant one thing for Vietnam: the country better put a team together.

Though the Vietnam Cricket Association (VCA) has been in existence since 2006, it's a league driven by expatriates that Vietnamese athletes have largely remained absent from. Perhaps a result of the complex rulebook or the epically time-consuming day-long matches, the sport's local impenetrability meant that any potential squad would be centuries behind their regional counterparts, such as Singapore and Thailand, who embraced cricket during British colonization. The French, unfortunately, were not the biggest cricket fanatics.

Shortly after the announcement in 2015, the Vietnamese government put out a call for tryouts and organized a training day once a week led by VCA players. Turnout was consistently bleak until a VND5 million monthly stipend was offered to entice athletes, but still the ragtag group of would-be cricket players found themselves

without a coach. That's when Mick Blinkhoff, an Australian who plays on the United Cricket Club in the VCA, was inadvertently thrust into the picture.

"It started in February of this year," says Mick. "I was playing a game verse a Malaysian Eleven and there were all these Vietnamese



kids in uniform there. Someone said it was the Vietnam cricket team and I asked who was coaching them. They said they don't have a coach and I thought 'Oh, that must be good.' The sarcasm in his tone is thick.

Out of curiosity, Mick decided to check out one of the team's training sessions and, as he explains, the situation quickly spiraled from there. "The guys all thought I was their new coach. I told them I've just come to have a look, but they didn't understand. When I was leaving, they asked, 'When are you coming back?'"

At this point, it starts to sound like something out of a movie, as sport proved to transcend language and cultural barriers and formed a bond between the expat and the aspiring athletes. With previous experience coaching youths and finding himself at a time in life when he was both able and willing to make the large

commitment that such an undertaking would require, it was an agreeable match and Mick came on board to train the team without any compensation.

Love For the Game

A lifelong player, Mick shares that he's been playing since he could walk. "My two older brothers were playing, so I always tried to match myself up against them. I started playing in school. Then high school. Then I didn't play for a few years and when I was about 24, I decided to go back and play. I'd finish working in a bar at around 5 a.m., get up at 8 a.m. and go play cricket for eight or nine hours in the sun, then get two hours of sleep and go back to work. You do it for the love," he adds. But in order to fully understand the coach, it's important to take a step back.

Still living in Australia, Mick

took a six-week adventure the previous year and arrived in Saigon on the back end of the trip when life threw him a surprise. He fell for a girl named Thao on his last day in the city and everything changed. He got as far as Da Nang before turning back, sensing that Thao would be important in his life. Again, he would soon have to leave to catch a flight from Hong Kong back to Australia, and again he would disregard his itinerary.

Eventually, Mick would return to Australia and as he was figuring out his next move, Thao was there visiting when his mother passed away. "I had a bit of a breakdown moment after that," he recalls, "I remember doing an Iron Man and was in the last kilometer of the run and I thought 'I'm not doing this again. I'm leaving Australia.'"





the team waits in limbo to hear if the sport will be included in the 2019 SEA Games, hosted in the Philippines, Mick's thoughts are on local development. "We need to have a federation set up. That's on the government and it's not easy to do, but once we do that we can get the International Cricket Council to sponsor some money. They'll pay for some coaches to come over or pay for gear and grounds."

"We also want to start a Saigon Cricket Club, which would be predominantly Vietnamese-based," he tells. "It would have a couple of expats on the team. I'd probably play with them and we've got a few other guys we'd like to join the club to sort of mentor them through a season or two."

Finally faced with some downtime, however, Mick's able to take a minute and look back on the whirlwind that's taken place this past year. "It was a really good relationship," he says reflecting on his time with the players. "Some of them sent me messages in Vietnamese after and Thao had to translate them. They were really nice. I hope that the guys got a lot out of it." ■

That was my moment. The next day I resigned and ten days later I was here in Vietnam. I literally sold everything I had, so that's what I've been living off of."

Maybe it was the comfort found in his love for the game or the unexpected life changes that led him to accept whatever came his way—perhaps a combination of both—but Mick embraced the opportunity to develop cricket in his newfound home. "Initially, I was only doing three or four days and by the end I was doing six or seven days with them. I was also teaching them English on top of that. The game is predominantly English-spoken. The terms are in English and the umpires control the games in English. That's why I started giving them two 90-minute lessons a week."

Though the SEA Games did not ultimately go as planned—"We had the gold and bronze medalists in our pool. It was a tough draw," Mick admits—it was the team's process of learning and overcoming obstacles along the way that he's most prepared to talk about. From the challenges of less than ideal training grounds, to long distance commutes and a lack of funding, the players refused to get discouraged despite plenty of reasons to. "They train hard and they do what they're told. With some kids back home you'll get attitudes, but these guys just do it," the coach says proudly.

With most of the players residing outside of the city and traveling from as far as 65 kilometers away daily, the team managed to secure a dorm facility in Saigon in the months leading up to the competition. Training, however, still had its challenges, as Mick notes, "It's an outdoor sport and we primarily trained in the wet season, so half the time we didn't have facilities. Also, they play cricket on turf—it's like clay, grass, and dirt. Here, we play on concrete with a synthetic covering and there's a massive difference."

Even covering the travel expenses of the SEA Games was not a foregone conclusion, as he goes on to point

out, "We actually funded the trip ourselves by getting a sponsorship from Skechers, who donated the money. Accommodation alone was around USD7,000."

Now that the competition is over and



Image by Ngoc Tran

Escape

into
the Coconut Forest
in Hoi An

Recently opened, Boutique Cam Thanh Resort is located in the lush, green Bay Mau coconut forest in Hoi An

Text and Images Provided by
Boutique Cam Thanh

SITUATED IN CAM THANH

Township, Hoi An City, Quang Nam Province, about 3km southeast of Hoi An Ancient Town, the Bay Mau coconut forest is a famous attraction in Vietnam. Spanning more than seven acres, the forest of water coconut palms has a unique history. During the French Resistance, and the American War, this mangrove forest served as the base for the revolutionists, and witnessed many important historical events by its people.

Despite the wars, the Bay Mau coconut forest still flourishes. Travelers can paddle their ways through the forest and admire endless views of the green coconut forest. Here, guests can see little huts with roofs made of coconut leaves scattered on both sides of the canals. Most importantly, the forest is home to many indigenous wildlife, including various species of fish and native birds because of the pristine condition of the forest. For many Quang Nam natives, the forest is sometimes referred to as “The Little Mekong” in Hoi An.

Four-star Boutique Cam Thanh Resort in Bay Mau coconut forest was inspired by traditional Vietnamese villages, with features such as red tiles, bamboo rafters and coconut-leaf roofs. All 40 rooms and villas are situated in three distinctive areas, each with their own swimming pool. At the villa's

gate, guests will be charmed by the green orchards garden and the unobstructed view overlooking the cool clear water of the pool. Designed to reflect traditional Vietnamese architecture and to be eco-friendly, each guestroom is conveniently equipped with modern amenities to meet the expectations of travelers from all over the world.

Guests can wind-down at Ngon Café or listen to ambient music at Nón Bar while enjoying tropical cocktails and comfort foods with unparalleled views of green coconut palms along the waterway. The Lúa Restaurant can host up to 200 guests, and features authentic Quang Nam and Vietnamese cuisines with a touch of Western delicacy. Nestled among the water coconut forest, the Dừa Spa is a little gem for those who seek pampering experiences from the region's top masseuses. In addition, the resort has a public exhibition area that will walk guests through the rich history and culture of the Cam Thanh region.

To provide guests at Boutique Cam Thanh Resort with the best cultural experiences in the region, ten bungalow boutique shops will be offering Quang Nam and Hoi An's handicrafts and products right to guests' doorsteps with local gifts such as silks, lanterns,

potteries, hand-woven baskets, hand-embroidered arts, and more. The resort's organic vegetables garden is always open for guests who would like to get their hands on some gardening and harvesting of the region's specialty vegetables.

Specially-built for private excursions, the resort's basket boat can host up to 4 people including the local paddler, who will be taking guests on a fantastic journey through the water coconut forest. Exciting activities await, such as fishing and watching boat basket dancing. Souvenirs and gifts such as rings, necklaces, roses or hats made from coconut leaves by the paddlers will also be available for purchase.

The serene An Bang beach is only a short 3-km drive from Boutique Cam Thanh Resort. With shuttle bus services, guests can simply hop on and get off to the tropical sun, white sand anytime they want. Not only that, the Hoi An Ancient Town, Tra Que Vegetables Village, and Thanh Ha Pottery Village are all within reach of Boutique Cam Thanh Resort's shuttle buses.

“This place was once a historical site. As it becomes a tourist destination for local culture discovery tours, Bay Mau coconut forest will bring guests into a different realm, leaving behind all the hustle and bustle of a busy life,” says Mr. Tang Kim Tan, General Manager of Boutique Cam Thanh Resort. “We are delighted to have a place that resembles your dear home with traditional eco-friendly features and modern 4-star facilities, inviting you to a unique getaway experience from your present day life. ■



To celebrate its grand opening, Boutique Cam Thanh Resort has a promotion from now until the end of December 2017: 30% discount on accommodations with free set menu per room per night. Stay 3 nights, pay 2 nights, free set menu per room per stay. For more info, visit boutiquecamthanhresort.com, call +84 (0) 235 3947999 or email: reservation@boutiquecamthanhresort.com.



Reflecting *on* 20 Years

This year marks a significant milestone for Loreto Vietnam

Text by **Deborah Cotter**
Images Provided by **Loreto**

LORETO VIETNAM (*www.loretovietnam.org*) started with a simple premise—that education has the power to change lives. It was established in 1997 by Sister Trish Franklin to help poor and disadvantaged children, including those with special needs, to develop a love of learning. Trish, an experienced teacher in her native Australia, believed deeply in the transformative power of learning and wanted to see all children, regardless of circumstance, reach their full potential. Trish believed that every child should be seen as a ‘learner’ and that Loreto Vietnam had a role to play in lifting learners into the future.

Loreto Vietnam has always aimed to be responsive to community needs while equipping children with the skills that they need to reach their potential. To

an educator the answer to unlocking a child’s potential is obvious—to develop a love of learning. “Children by nature are inquisitive about the world around them: they seek answers to questions, they enjoy being imaginative, they seek social interaction with peers and, when provided with an environment which celebrates these qualities, can grow and blossom as individuals,” says Jaom Fisher, Loreto’s current Executive Director.

When Trish arrived in Vietnam in 1995 about 60 percent of the population lived below the poverty line. Poverty meant that many families, especially those in the countryside around Ho Chi Minh City, were not able to provide for their children. Trish observed that “poor and struggling families in rural and remote areas had low and unstable

incomes, resulting in a high number of school drop-outs as children were forced to look for work to feed their families. The high unemployment and overpopulation in rural areas also forced many families to migrate to the bigger cities, which caused the break-up of families which, in turn, led to the absence of role models for the children. In some cases, children ended up being ‘sold’ or abandoned. They slept on the streets and became scavengers, beggars, shoes shiners, market laborers, carriers, dishwashers and prostitutes. Apart from lacking self-esteem and security, they suffered from hunger and poor health, received no schooling and had few values. This made them more vulnerable to drugs, alcohol, crime, sexual abuse and violence.”



The Buffalo House

Responding to these needs, Trish founded Loreto Vietnam. Initial work focused on setting up shelters to house, educate and provide some security for young, vulnerable street children. It soon became apparent that while this was important work, to prevent children from ending up on the streets it was necessary to work in the communities that they originally came from. "The kids were so poor they couldn't go to school, they didn't have kindergartens. We were keen to get them early so they could develop a love of learning, so they could go home to mum and dad and say 'oh school is fantastic.'"

Many rural and remote schools had limited resources, inadequate sized classrooms, and students were often attending school in substandard structures, some with no toilet facilities. One memorable project in Phu Yen province became known as 'the buffalo house' to Loreto Vietnam staff. Kindergarten students were attending school in a dirt-floor room that had formally been a buffalo stable, complete with straw still on the floor. The children had no learning materials and no toilet facilities. These basic amenities were impacting on both students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. Loreto responded to the clear need for financial and infrastructure support through their rural school development program.

Loreto Vietnam has facilitated a love of learning for thousands of children

through building environments which support and stimulate them: building kindergartens, classrooms, computer rooms, and hygienic toilet blocks in HCMC and five other provinces in the south of Vietnam. Loreto has also worked with special needs kids and families to enhance their life opportunities through specialized education, life-skills training and building a special needs school. Some of these kids have successfully completed tertiary education and are contributing back to the community.

Loreto Vietnam also works with communities to try to understand why children either never attend or drop out of school. Community engagement has taught the organization that there are many reasons why children don't attend school, from not being able to afford uniforms or books to the distance between home and school being too much of a challenge. Recently, Loreto Vietnam staff spoke to a young girl who worked to supplement her family's meagre income by searching for recyclable items at the local rubbish dump. She had found an old rice sack with a princess image on the front which she used as her school bag. It was her prized possession. To support communities overcome such obstacles, Loreto Vietnam provides school packs full of essential school materials and bikes to get to-and-from school.

Naturally, the success of Loreto

Vietnam does not come down to one person. Loreto Vietnam has been blessed with a dedicated group of supporters who steadfastly support its vision and mission to empower the underprivileged in Vietnam through access to quality education. These supporters have worked hard within their communities in both Vietnam and abroad to raise awareness, funds and ongoing support to help underprivileged kids. From huge music festivals to the monthly SpamCham (yes – salty-meat-in-a-can Spam) networking and fundraising event to corporate CSR engagement, it is the supporters who have enabled Loreto Vietnam to have such a positive impact on the lives of thousands of children.

In 2017, Vietnam continues on its way to becoming a major development success story. However, that success can only be sustained if it is shared equally across all sectors of society. Despite Vietnam's firm commitment to social equity, there is a growing divide between the rich and poor, especially between those living in rural areas compared to those living in urban centers, which makes access to quality education even more important in the years ahead.

Looking back on the last 20 years, it is clear that Loreto Vietnam has much to be proud of. Looking forward it is also clear that the organization is well placed to continue its mission to help improve access to quality education for the most underprivileged. ■





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Not For Dogs



Dr. An is one of the veterinarians at Animal Doctor International. He has special interest in veterinary orthopedics and surgery in general following his visits to a specialist hospital in Brisbane, Australia.

Human food that are dangerous for dogs to consume

YOU PROBABLY WANT TO SHARE all your delicious people food with your pup. After all, who can resist those puppy-dog eyes begging for a morsel? But hold off on spoiling your fur baby. Sometimes being a good doggy parent is knowing when to say, “No.” Some foods are just downright bad for dogs and can cause all sorts of health problems. Even if your dog has eaten these foods in the past with no problems, they could be causing serious issues that you might not be aware of. Here are a few foods you should never feed dogs, no matter how adorably they beg.

Chocolate

Winner in “the bad food for your dog” competition is one of your most favorite treats—chocolate. It contains methylxanthines—although they are not harmful for human but are extremely toxic for dogs. When ingested by pets, it can cause vomiting, diarrhea, panting, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, seizures and even death. Dark chocolate is more dangerous than milk chocolate. Save those sweets treats only for yourself.

Candy, Gum, Peanut Butter, Baked Goods

Xylitol is a common ingredient when it comes to these foods. It causes an insulin surge in your dog’s blood that can lead to a drop in blood sugar and concurrently liver failure. Symptoms include lethargy, vomiting, loss of coordination, seizures, and even death. Although peanut butter are sometimes made without xylitol, you should check the ingredients list of your foods carefully before making a purchase.

Grape and Raisins

Although the toxic ingredients for dog in grapes and raisins remain unknown,

these fruits are famous for their ability to cause acute kidney failure when ingested by dogs. Until more information about the toxic substance is discovered, avoid feeding grape and raisins to your dogs at any cost.

Onions and Garlic

A small dose of this food combo might not do much harm but a larger dose or regular small dose can lead to severe poisoning. Thiosulphate is believed to be the toxic ingredient. These food can cause gastrointestinal irritation and red blood cell damage which leads to anemia. Symptoms can include weakness, vomiting and loss of appetite.

Milk and Other Dairy Products

A slice of cheese, which is suddenly dropped on the floor, is not good for your dogs since they aren’t built with an enzyme to process cow milk products. Lactase, an enzyme required for breaking down lactose in milk are not well-processed in dogs. Dairy products ingestion can cause vomiting, diarrhea or other gastrointestinal diseases. Besides, the high fat content also leads to pancreatitis in dogs just like fatty meals consumption.

Raw/Uncooked Meat, Eggs and Bones

Raw eggs and uncooked meat can contain Salmonella and E. Coli, two of the most harmful bacteria for pets and human. Wolves can eat fresh meat from the kill but it doesn’t mean that your dog can too. Avidin in raw eggs can lower body’s ability to absorb biotin (Vitamin B), which can lead to skin and coat problems. People believe that feeding raw meats and bones to your pets is a natural and healthy options but this is not the case. For domestic pets, it is very common for them to

choke on bones or their digestive tract can be lodged in or punctured with bones grafts.

Salt

Popcorns and pretzels are believed to be harmful for dogs but that’s only the case if they are salted. Large ingestion of salts not only cause excessive thirst and urination but also leading to a condition called sodium ion poisoning in dogs. Other signs that can be included are: vomiting, diarrhea, tremors and seizures. In case of severe overdose—it can lead to death. So we always recommend our clients to avoid feeding their pets potato chips, salted popcorns and pretzels.

Safe Food For Dogs

Pasta and rice are acceptable, even better if your dogs can be fed with brown rice but these ingredients should be no more than 10 percent of their normal diet. Whole wheat bread is normally good for your dogs as long as they are not raw and salted. Lean meat from chicken, turkey, lean ground beef to steak are healthy but remember to cook them well. Fat content should always be kept at the lowest level as possible when preparing a home-cooked meal for dogs. Vegetables are a good source of vitamins and fibers for your pets. Some vegetables can be eaten raw like carrots, cucumber, zucchini and lettuce or steamed like green beans, broccoli and asparagus.

As long as you stick to a diet approved by the vet, your pet should be ok. In addition to that, you can research some other human healthy foods that you are able to share with your dogs. Control the urge to feed those puppy faces and keep most of those human food for yourself. ■



A member of the Paris Bar, **Antoine Logeay** has been practicing law first in France, mainly in litigation and arbitration, then in Vietnam for three years as an associate of Audier & Partners based at its Hanoi office. Audier & Partners is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

The Visa Vortex

Matching the many different types of visas with the right person

Dear Antoine,

I'm looking to open a business in Vietnam in the next few months and wanted to discuss some of the ambiguous Vietnamese visa laws. Although the visa situation is constantly changing, do you know with what visa I can open a business in Vietnam? I've read that if I co-own a joint stock company (JSC) here with my Vietnamese colleague I can apply for a work permit on that business? Is this true? But before that, what visa do I begin with—a business visa I'm guessing?

SOME LEGAL ISSUES ARE MORE complicated than others—and visas are not the clearest one, considering the number of different types of visa. Let's see what the Vietnamese law says about it.

Define Your Position In The Company: Executive Or Board Member?

First thing you need to know: a work permit is required for any foreigner working in Vietnam, save some exceptions. According to one of these exceptions, the members of the board of management of a Vietnamese company are allowed to exercise their assignments as members of the board in Vietnam without the need to obtain a work permit.

However, this exception is limited to members of the board. Other positions in the company do not offer the same advantage: For example, the exception does not apply to the chairman of the board or to the director of the company. If you hold concurrently one of these positions and the position of member of the board, then you need to obtain a work permit.

Coming back to your specific situation—to partner with your Vietnamese colleague to set up a company in Vietnam—it means that work permit requirement will depend on the role you wish to have in the company. If you're considering an executive position in the company (such

as director), then you will need to obtain a work permit. But if you plan to only invest in the company without having an executive role (while holding a seat at the board to oversee and determine the company's activity), then you may avoid the work permit requirement.

To give you a more practical idea of what that means, the director of the company, as the "legal representative," has the obligation to reside in Vietnam. He, or she, manages the day-to-day activity of the company. In comparison, the board of management meets generally four times a year only. During the meetings, the board members define the general policies that would be implemented daily by the director.

Be Ready For Plenty Of Paperwork

The second thing you need to know: in case you enjoy the abovementioned exception to the work permit, you are required to obtain, from the provincial authority where the Vietnamese company is registered, a certificate of exemption of a work permit, which is issued at the request of the company. After having obtained this certificate, you may apply for a temporary residence card.

The procedure to obtain such certificate of exemption may be a little bit lengthy, but in any case, will be less burdensome (especially in terms of paperwork) than the work permit

procedure.

What is important for you is the following point: you may have a work permit (executive position) or be exempted of work permit and have a certificate of exemption (board member), in both cases you will be allowed to stay in Vietnam for a long time and receive a temporary residence card. This card will allow you to reside in Vietnam and to go out and in the territory as much as you wish.

What About The "Preparation Phase" (Before Establishing The Company)?

The above advice applies to you once the company is already established and operates. However, before operation of the company, you may need to be in Vietnam in order to prepare your business with your Vietnamese colleague: for example, to find the appropriate premises, to open bank accounts, start negotiations with partners and providers, etc.

There is not really a specific visa for the "preparation phase" of an investment. Some businesspeople use a tourist visa. Others find a sponsor in Vietnam that invites them for business purpose (for example, this could be one of your future client). These kinds of visa may be up to 12 months.

I hope the above will be helpful and I wish you good luck on your business project! ■



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THE OCEAN RESORT



DOWNTOWN CHIC

Designer **Mary Gri**
Photographer **Rab Le photography**
Model **Katherina Kyrstya**



MAGRY was founded by Russian-born Mary Gri, who moved to Saigon three years ago to work as head designer for a Vietnamese company. She launched her first women's ready-to-wear collection this year. The MAGRY label embodies casual, downtown French chic with a sometimes cocky, rock grunge.





MAGRY's limited edition collection, where each dress is produced in a limited number, was put on sell a month ago and can be ordered online on its Facebook shop (www.facebook.com/magryfashion) and in boutiques in HCMC, Muine and Nha Trang.





Who What Ear

in Fashion

A lot of professionals in fashion have long seen Vietnam as a market of producers, and imitators. But those who have been paying close attention know that exciting things are happening in Vietnam. From being a producers market, Vietnam is slowly shifting to being a creators market. Designer brands that excel both in fashion and sustainable solutions are up and coming and they are not only conquering the local market but expanding to a worldwide audience. What's made in Vietnam, no longer stays in Vietnam.

IMAGE PROVIDED BY PUNDA MILIA DESIGN



The Zebra^{ra} Tote



In case you missed it, Punda Milia's striking black and white totes are this year's must-have

Interview by **Christine Van**
Images Provided by **Punda Milia Design**

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN A PURSE was the perfect size to carry our everyday items, but as technology has gotten bigger with tablets, smartphones (along with extra power packs), and our lives more complicated with what-ifs (an umbrella/raincoat if it rains, a shawl if

the air-con is blasting at the office) a luxury, oversized bag has become the all-important practical fashion statement.

Oi speaks to Minh Hennessey, the co-founder and designer, along with Prisca Ongonga-Daehn, behind the "zebra tote."



You and Prisca come from very different professional backgrounds. Prisca has experiences in the fashion industry with her own labels Cashmere Crush and Prisca O, and also worked in HR recruitment. While you've worked in satellite communications. How did you two meet and decided to launch Punda Milia (pundamiliadesign.com)? How is Africa the common bond?

For as long as I can remember, I have had a love for all things design, whether architecture, interiors, landscapes or beautiful arts and crafts. I continued to share this passion through my home life, but my career life was very different. I have been involved in the IT Industry for over 20 plus years, having worked for companies like CSC and Computer Associates. When we invested in our own satellite company that was when my African adventures came to life. We relocated to Tanzanian in 2009 and we spent the next seven years building and eventually selling our company after which we relocated to Vietnam.

When I first arrived in Saigon I met Prisca through our school (BIS) at the parents meeting. When we were introduced and I heard her name I knew that she was originally from East

Africa. She was born in Kenya, which is Tanzania's neighbour, and I was extremely excited to meet somebody from that part of the world, considering we just left after all those years. We can also speak to each other in Kiswahili, which has been a lot of fun. The bond was instantaneous.

What does Punda Milia mean?

It means zebra in Kiswahili (and, coincidentally, "PM" are our initials).

My mom and grandmother has the plastic version of this bag, they use it for almost everything - carrying grocery, as a hamper for dirty clothes, a beach tote - what inspired you to redesign this specific bag into a luxury piece?

I had been traveling to Vietnam prior to 2015 on a regular basis as I was building some holiday houses with my father in the Mekong Delta. This was where I really saw this basket in action and how strong it was, the tradespeople were carrying all sorts of tools in them. It came together for me at this point as it reminded me so much of Africa where the locals make use out of all materials and turn them into everyday practical vessels or items to assist in their daily life. It was around the same time I met Prisca in Saigon, where we connected with our Eastern African bond. We discussed the totes in detail but realized that they were not stylish enough or could be considered a fashion accessory due to the designs and low quality craftsmanship, so we decided to recreate our own version and elevate this very simple *kikapu* (basket in Swahili) into an item you can carry from the beach to a shopping trip anywhere in the world.

It is our original idea of combining high-grade imported leathers by skilled leather artisans that helps make our totes stand out. We strongly believe that this reinvention and redesign has resulted in a stylish essential tote, which carries the individual through many aspects of her or his life. It is highly versatile, practical and very strong.

There's an interesting quote on your website - "creating the zebra of the accessories market" - can you explain the meaning behind it?

If anyone has ever had the privilege of visiting the Serengeti and seeing these magnificent creatures live they will understand. All the creatures of the Serengeti are beautiful, but there is something very special about the *Punda Milia*, particularly with its infamous marks and colorings. They stand out from the crowd; we wanted to do the same with these totes. The basis of our designs in our main tote is always in black and white; we will then accentuate that with beautiful fashionable leather colors on the handles, bases and keyring attachments.



Black and white is timeless—everyone is able to wear this striking combination. Our logo is the head of a *Punda Milia* (pundamiliadesign.com).

Tell us about the eco aspects of the bag.

The totes are woven by families from the Mekong Delta, using locally produced recycled materials. Our handles and bases are made from high-grade imported leathers and crafted by local artisans. We have spent many months perfecting the weave and other aspects of the leather handle designs to achieve the finest quality, providing both comfort and stunning aesthetics. We have not left any detail unturned, from the dust bag right down to our boxes have the same level of thought process. Once the finished tote has been delivered back to our design studio, each and every bag is checked and finished off by hand prior to shipping. Currently our distribution points are Australia, Milan and Singapore.

The bags are sold only online and mostly overseas. Where is your largest buying market?

We are currently targeting the European and Australasian markets. We have recently signed a distributor in Milan and a luxury online label in Australia. Australia is moving towards a single use plastic ban by 2018, our essential totes will be the perfect stylish eco tote to use when shopping.

Can we expect a new collection inspired by Vietnam soon?

Definitely in the near future we will design a collection based on our inspirations of Vietnam because this is the country that has allowed us to explore our creative side and turn it into reality. Vietnam is full of talented artisans and it has been an amazing journey to date working with them. ■

Drama Queen

Supermodel Jessica Minh Anh discusses catwalks on the Hoover Dam, reshaping the fashion industry and how it all began studying IT in Birmingham

Text by **Chris Humphrey**
Images Provided by **J model management**

HAVE YOU BEEN TO THE EIFFEL Tower? What about the Grand Canyon? London's Tower Bridge? All questions you might reasonably be asked by a travel-obsessed friend. You might even be able to answer positively to many of them. But what exactly did you do there? There are few in the world who would be able to answer these questions in as dramatic a fashion as Jessica Minh Anh.

Jessica has made a name for herself by organizing and starring in some of the world's most spectacular and idiosyncratic catwalks: shows have taken place on London's Tower Bridge, the One World Trade Centre in New York and the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur. She's also created 'catwalks on water' on the River Seine, the Hudson River and on sundecks of cruise liners. In 2013, she broke the record for the world's highest catwalk with a show on top of the Grand Canyon's observation deck.

They say she's a visionary who's reshaping the fashion world. They say that for her, nothing is impossible, and that she represents the fashion world of the future. But who really is Jessica Minh Anh? A girl who was born in Hanoi, Vietnam, before moving to Russia at aged three; who studied in Malaysia before doing a degree in IT in Birmingham. How did someone doing such a generic, run-of-the-mill course become a progressive beacon of haute couture?

We meet at the Metropole, one of Hanoi's oldest and most opulent hotels. In some ways, she's exactly what I expected: confident, immaculately well-dressed and slightly late. She's wearing a pink jumpsuit and coat, designed by Vietnamese designer Ha Linh Thu. Her hands are glittering with golden rings, courtesy of Cristina Sabatini. And yet, when we get down to talking, she immediately surprises me.

I ask her about her years studying in Malaysia and the UK and how she got into fashion in the first place. "I studied IT," she says, smiling. "I am a programmer. I'm good with databases and I can do corporate finance." Perhaps not the answer you would expect. But then, there's a lot about her that you wouldn't expect.



In Fetty Rusli on the Brooklyn Bridge

Jessica became a brand in the fashion world almost overnight. As soon as she graduated from university she set up her own company. She talks about decisions she's made with such clarity, it's as if, despite the risk, it was always an obvious thing to do. "I wanted to move to London. And in order to make a big move and for people to know who I am, I couldn't just go small. So I put all the money I had into the first show, and that was a show at the Savoy. We had the BBC there, the Independent... everyone was there. You see, you have to take risks. Even the biggest designers don't dare to use the Savoy, you know. I didn't wait to test the water—I just did it."

For anyone else with similar ambitions, a show at the Savoy would probably represent a remarkable start to a career in fashion. For Jessica, the show was just the first step of her journey. The perspective she gained from the experience convinced her that she should never do a show less impressive than the one she had just finished.

"There was nothing, at that point, as good as the Savoy. Then I looked up and saw London's Tower Bridge. I realized I wanted to do a show there. It was a crazy idea. Everyone thought it was crazy. I thought it was crazy... so I spoke to the Tower Bridge people and they were like 'yeah, not going to happen.'"

One can only assume she has a particularly galvanizing pitch, or a certain self-belief that inspired people to have faith in her. Within only a few months, the situation in London had changed. She was told that in order to hold a catwalk on the bridge, the whole event would have to be set up in two hours—including the lighting, the sound, the chairs and the entire back stage. "We managed to do that. We cooperated with a very good production company in London called Penguin and they managed to do everything accurately, and the show was a huge success. It was also a history-making event—nothing like that had happened in London before."

Fashion With A Cause

Since then she's gone on to create catwalks all over the world in equally unique settings. She's also observed many other shows, and the relative dullness of some of these seem to have encouraged her as much as the success of her own events. "I've been to so many fashion shows and so many of them are really boring. It's just in an empty room or they include superficial things to create an environment. It's interesting but if I want to have a show in the forest, I'll bring people to the forest. And that's what I did, I brought people to the Grand Canyon skywalk. I didn't want to create something fake."

In 2014 she starred in a fashion show at the One World Trade Centre. It was the first event ever held there, six months before it officially opened. Her résumé is obviously impressive, but I can't help wondering how she can possibly continue



On the Eiffel Tower with Montblanc

to surprise people, to keep pushing the boundaries. I ask what she's got planned next and she's uncharacteristically coy. "I can't possibly tell you about them," she says with a grin, "but I can tell you that this year I'm going to Hong Kong, Tokyo and possibly the Maldives."

I notice that Vietnam, the place of her birth, isn't on that list. "I've only done two jobs in Vietnam. I was a judge of a supermodel competition. I haven't done much here, I haven't even done a proper fashion show here. I'm looking into a venue in Vietnam so I can do a show here, but I want to be really well prepared. This is my country. I want to make sure it'll be a blast." I suggest a catwalk on top of Long Bien Bridge. She thanks me, but doesn't seem completely convinced just yet.

I also get the sense that she's searching for destinations that offer something that Vietnam might not be able to offer just yet. Her 2015 catwalk at Gemasolar, a concentrated solar power plant east of Seville, and a catwalk on the Hoover Dam, happened for a reason. "Sustainable energy. I'm very into it. Which is why I'm also very interested in the Maldives, because of the environmental issues there. I think when a fashion show combines with a meaningful cause it's a lot more powerful. But my shows are not just about fashion, they're also about combining and promoting different cultures and styles and ways of thinking. That's what makes it exciting, otherwise I would be bored."

Throughout our entire interview there's one thing that's been on my mind more than anything else. There's an undeniable uniqueness to her events, but I can't help thinking

that the spectacle of her shows must distract from the fashion on display. She laughs... "I've been asked this many times. I believe one element will never overshadow another. The clothes will be presented in such a way that they are highlighted. Why do fashion stores put on beautiful displays? The surrounding brings the beauty into sharper focus. The grandness of the venue makes the clothes look better. They complement each other. The most beautiful designs should be displayed in the most beautiful locations."

I'm not entirely convinced, and others probably aren't either if she's been asked so many times. But that's beside the point. Catwalks, she says, are "my life," and it seems beyond reasonable doubt that spectacular shows of this genre are something she was born to take part in. "I've always been an extrovert. I can't remember the last time I had stage fright. I just wasn't born with it. The bigger the crowd the better."

It's almost time for her next appointment, at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Truc Bach. I mention their sky bar on the 20th floor and she seems interested. Perhaps it won't be long until both Vietnamese and international news channels are suddenly interested in that space, or the sky bar atop the Lotte Tower or, if I'm really lucky, the rusty heights of Long Bien Bridge. Vietnam will only be so lucky if venues here are as remotely proactive as Jessica is. One of the last things she said is still ringing in my ears: "If you think about things for too long, the opportunity will pass you by." ■

a MODEL CITIZEN

Vietnam's male supermodel explains why modeling fame isn't as simple as looking good

Text by **NPD Khanh**
Image by **Ngoc Tran**

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, and with the aid of shows such as *Vietnam's Next Top Model*, and *The Face Vietnam*, modeling has emerged and grown in local psyche as a legitimate and highly desirable career choice. Once known only in certain circles, Ha Anh, Hoang Thuy and Thanh Hang have become household names, serving as idols for many young girls to aspire to. And yet, among these power players of the modeling world, the one model with the most impact on the entire industry and the longest staying power, surprisingly, is not any of these lovely ladies, but a man past his 40.

"To get to where I am, you have to be more than just a model. You need to contribute far more than that to the fashion industry. I started as a model, but I became a pioneer," claims Vu Duc Hai, arguably Vietnam's most enduring supermodel, renowned actor, fashion entrepreneur and multiple-time judge of *Vietnam's Next Top Model*.

Vu Duc Hai, born 1976, became a model at 17 years old. Today, at 41, well past the average expiration date of most models, he remained an influential figure, a bankable brand and an active force of progress in Vietnam's fashion world. With the enduring success Hai has enjoyed, it's hard to believe that his introduction into modeling happened entirely by accident.

"I was signed onto a beauty and modeling contest... completely without my knowledge," Hai recounts with a fond smile. "Two of my childhood friends entertained ambitions, or perhaps they were just curious youngsters testing their limits. They heard about this competition and wanted to enter. But they didn't want to do it alone and since we had been inseparable back then, my name and photos were mailed alongside them without so much as a by-your-leave to me."

Hai's two friends failed in the first round, but Hai, the unsuspecting participant, passed onto the next.

It was then that he found out his unwitting entry and since there was nothing to lose and quite a bit to gain, eventually decided to go along with it. He would continue onto the next round, and the next, until

finally, the crown of the competition was placed on his head. And that was how Vu Duc Hai, started his career in a time when modeling wasn't even considered an actual job, especially for men.

Don't Stop At the Catwalk

As memorable an entry as that might have been, the things that actually made Duc Hai's famous happened two years later and many modeling jobs after. As Hai entered university, he was offered a job by a startup fashion company, Milano Joint Stock Corp.

"Not as a model," says Hai. "But as a representative, an entrepreneur and a negotiator. In short, I was to be Milano's face to the public and Milano's mouthpiece to foreign business. I was to sell the idea of luxurious and fashionable menswear to the mass and convince internationally renowned brands such as Gucci or Dolce & Gabbana to entrust their brands and products in Vietnam to Milano."

Back then, this was seen as an unpalatable offer by most models. Not only was it hard work, it was unforgiving and not terribly rewarding, if not outright punishing. "After the competition, there wasn't a lack of easy and well-paying jobs. Back then, the average Vietnamese made less than fifty dollars a month. How do you sell Dolce & Gabbana to people who made less than fifty dollars a month? More than that, how do you convince Dolce & Gabbana that you could sell their clothes to people who made less than fifty dollars a month? That it was worth it to invest in you and your venture? Imagine the sheer amount of work and effort and time... years of your life spent persuading some foreign giant to trust in you."

The challenges of Milano's job offer are deeper even than that. In the 1990s, before political normalization with the US and the increased international trade that came with it, Vietnam's fashion industry was in its infancy. There were no true local brands then and most, if not all, locals had no concept of high fashion and brand name products. The best sign of quality they knew was the "Made in the US" stamp that accompanied every parcel sent back home by *Viet Kieu* relatives. Italian haute couture was all but alien to the average Vietnamese buyers back then. That does not even account for the jungle of paperwork that all companies trading with foreign partners had to deal with in the 90s. It was no wonder Milano's offer was repeatedly turned down by the various models the company approached before Duc Hai. Despite knowing full well the difficulty of the job, the young model decided to accept it anyway.

The reason? Because he wanted more out of this career path. "It occurred to me that the fashion industry is deep and vast. Most models stop at the catwalk and the photoshoot, but that's just a tiny part of fashion, the most visible part. But I wanted more and I decided that I had to





learn and I had to achieve something other than strut the catwalk really well. Many of my peers told me it was unwise, but that was my choice.” This turned out to be the right choice because, while the next ten years brought many setbacks and defeats, it also catapulted Hai to supermodel status and entrenched him in the industry.

“I learned fashion,” he says. “I was given the opportunity to travel abroad and meet people from other countries, something precious few Vietnamese in the 90s could claim. I met Gianni. I met Donatella Versace. Naturally, I learned a lot. I worked hard and I did not let setbacks deter my efforts. Eventually, over years, my efforts produced results, and my results stacked and became progress. Whereas other companies were busy thinking that it was impossible to introduce the Vietnamese public to high fashion, I laid the foundation for those big brands to enter this market. And when they finally did, whose name do they remember?”

Eventually, Hai’s name became synonymous with Milano and luxury menswear in the 90s and 2000s. The crux of his success and lasting power in the effervescent world of fashion, claims the 41-years-old supermodel, is simply a desire to continually learn and grow, just like with any other career path.

Hai hasn’t stopped in just the fashion industry. Carrying the same attitude for growth into the cinematic world, in 2004, he made his debut on screen in Le Hoang’s critically acclaimed *Trai Nhay*, which was quickly followed by many more movies of varying success levels.

Contemplating modeling’s rising popularity as a career choice, Hai is both pensive and hopeful. “I understand the siren call that fame has on young people. I was there too once,” he cautions the many young men and women who

aspire to follow his and other veteran model’s footsteps. “But I do not necessarily agree with how modern media portrays modeling as a job. Frivolous despite its glamor, exploitative, fast and fleeting fame, and full of petty conflicts. All jobs, no matter how noble, has a dark side to it. That is unavoidable. But, if you are going to choose this world for your life, you must always think of what you can contribute back to the industry, to the community, to the public. Something good and positive. True progress. Only then will you have a future in modeling.” ■



Wearing it WRONG

The founder of Fashion4Freedom
talks ethics and activism

Interview by **Wes Grover**
Images Provided by **Fashion4Freedom**

Coming from a background in mergers and acquisitions, when LanVy Nguyen decided to transition into the fashion industry, she brought with her a knack for seeing through smoke and mirrors. The goal was to create high-end products in Vietnam, but finding a manufacturer who could do so in a guaranteed ethical manner proved a challenge. Consistently, LanVy saw laborers getting the short end of the stick, decided to do something about it, and Fashion4Freedom (www.fashion4freedom.com) was born in 2009.

BASED IN HUE, Fashion4Freedom has made waves in the design world with such eye-popping items as their ornately carved dragon shoes, yet it's their role in the supply chain that truly seeks to shake up the industry.

Recently, we caught up with

LanVy to learn about everything from inspiration to the empowerment of skilled laborers in Vietnam.

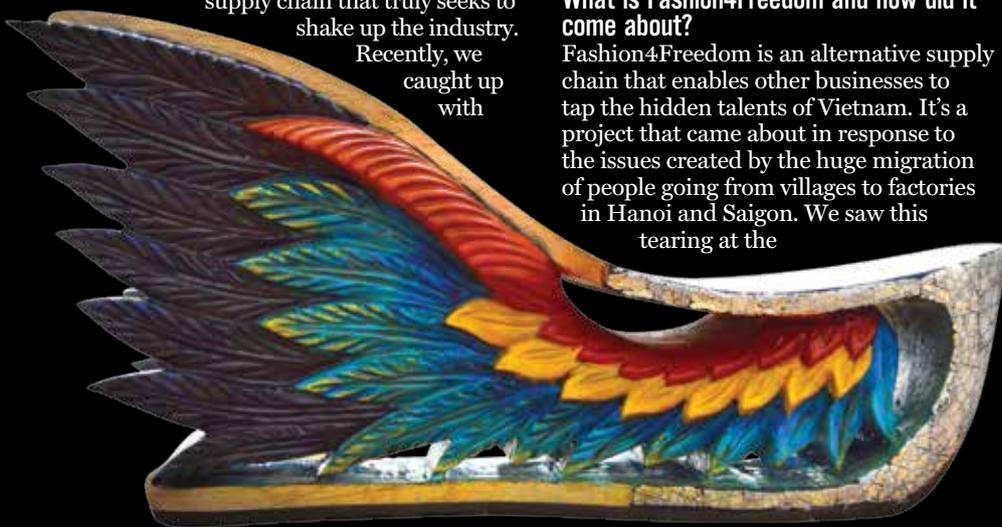
What is Fashion4Freedom and how did it come about?

Fashion4Freedom is an alternative supply chain that enables other businesses to tap the hidden talents of Vietnam. It's a project that came about in response to the issues created by the huge migration of people going from villages to factories in Hanoi and Saigon. We saw this tearing at the

social fabric in rural parts of the country. My concern was really how this migration issue affected society itself and the other nuances that come as a result.

I saw an NGO that had become very popular in Saigon that was supposed to be anti-human trafficking, but in reality, it really wasn't doing much about it. The president asked me to come and see if we could help some of the girls there to learn new skills and when I saw how the organization was working I just thought it was very underserving because there was no infrastructure. I was very concerned about the dichotomy of what's reported and what's really happening. If I'm here to assist you on my own time, then I need to actually help you build that infrastructure from the ground up, because otherwise we're dishonest. Surprisingly, many NGOs are not willing to go the long haul and build an infrastructure that would be meaningful.

We're trying to create an economic development program more than anything else, and it's really about building skills and funding equipment to make sure that the skill level matches where we want the design to be. For example, our dragon shoes were a major undertaking, as far as product development. It was really about proving that these pagoda carvers had skills that were translatable.





How do you differ from a company that simply donates a percentage of its profits?

Companies that say they donate a percentage, I'm skeptical that it ever happens. Who knows. You basically clean your hands of responsibility to truly be impactful. We're here as collaborators to solve a problem. We're not trying to provide a scholarship for one child. We're trying to ensure that the whole family has the economic wherewithal. If someone is a carpenter with a great skill but needs equipment, we want to equip them. It's a slow process making sure they can grow and that their hard work will get them to a place where they can support themselves.

The dragon shoes are part of the Saigon Socialite label - what was the inspiration behind this project?

Saigon Socialite started out as just a nickname. Most of our products never have a label on them. The idea is that you should be able to look at it and recognize the product. I wanted something that you could look at and know it was made in Vietnam, but Saigon Socialite was inspired by my great grandmother. She was married to a duke, my great grandfather, and she had these beautiful, hand carved clogs with mother of pearl inlaid. I had this idea that when you look at being a socialite, in its old form at the turn of the century, there was a sense that those who are wealthy have a responsibility to help people. A lot of Vietnamese look at the shoes and say, "Don't you know that's so wrong? Only the royal family is supposed

to carve dragons!" and I respond, "Well does that help anyone?" If these shoes can deliver employment, then I welcome someone from the royal family to come challenge me on this. For years, the shoes had their own notoriety.

Was there a particular moment that inspired you to change your life course and become an activist?

My husband and I are both from finance backgrounds and we lived through 9/11 in New York. We missed 9/11 by about two minutes. Seeing all of that, I wanted to change my course to start something creative and decided I would give myself three years to try. In that process, I saw some very tragic things. I used to call myself a "work slave," and then I started meeting people with real problems who couldn't get out of debt, couldn't get a better life. I started asking myself if I could do something about it. It wasn't for the sake of myself, but it's been a privilege to learn a lot about myself through this process. I feel like I'm a student of philosophical philanthropy.

What specifically are the ethical production issues that you hope to address?

If you look at the industry, these big massive buyers immunize themselves against any of these problems of production. They send an agent from a labor organization who then signs off that the factory of production is okay and I find that people who are supposed to be on guard and watch, like labor organizations, don't really know what's happening. The buyers and the agents come together and really collude. The labor organizations have the buyer sign a piece of paper that says they want to disclose their labor practices and then they'll handle all of the certifications and make sure the Vietnamese or Chinese factories comply with everything. But in reality, that does nothing. The guys who work at the labor organizations sit in their nice, air-conditioned offices and have no idea how manufacturers hire or if they even pay their workers. On the books, it looks okay, but the buyers are still pressuring for production prices to go down and the price is set by how productive the manufacturing line is.

How does Fashion4Freedom's model change this?

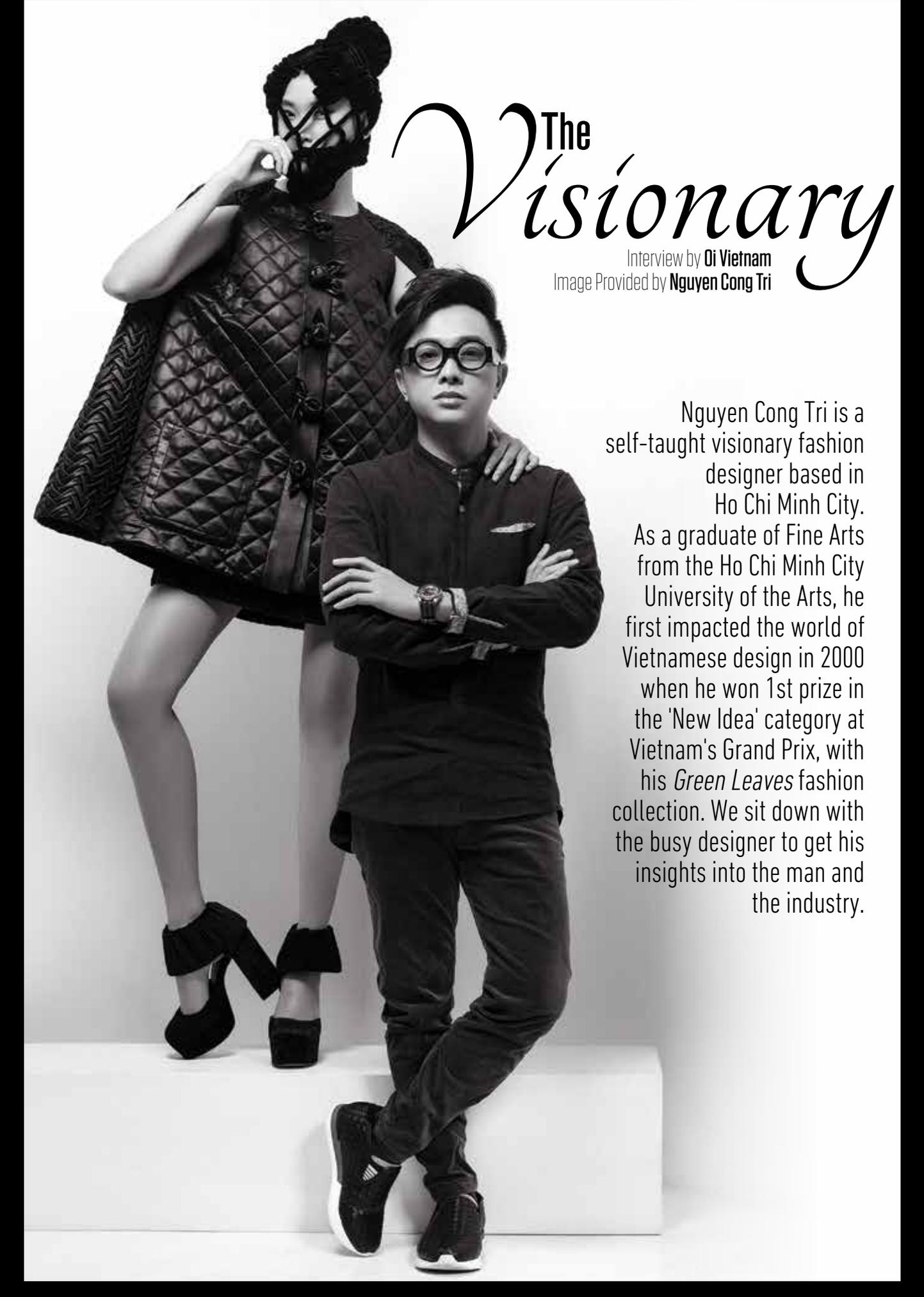
That's part of our core. We don't rush to do mass production. Our model on the social issue side is very different from the model on the fashion side. On the fashion side, there's constant product development, but that usually happens on paper first. Designers will say something like "I want pink alligator skin this year," so everybody rushes to find an albino alligator to then make a Pepto-Bismol pink because that's what the designer wants. But what we do is reverse the design process and look at what our artisans can do now.

So you design based on what you have the means to create instead of what consumers want?

Yes. Actually, designers don't know what the consumer wants, but they often believe that they can push them to want something. It's the chicken or the egg. The thing is that it's all about really understanding what's unique and not being afraid to venture at the edge. Let's say the consumer wants all black, but then everybody will produce all black and if we produce pastels, like we did this season, it becomes very exciting. People could not get enough of it and that's understanding the market. There will always be a demand for the outlier. I follow the black swan theory and we can do it more efficiently and effectively because first we look at who can do what in Vietnam.

But even if consumers don't like our products, our other business model is that we produce for other brands. I'm less interested in selling our brands, than I am about producing and selling other people's brands. In order to really change the supply chain and make it understanding and inclusive of artisans, I can't say, "Look at me! We're doing great crafts and I'm not telling you how to do it." We are completely transparent down to how much the artisan gets, how much the material is, and how much you can move the price point. That's why I named one of our labels WRONG, because we're doing everything wrong and contrary to the industry. ■





The Visionary

Interview by **Oi Vietnam**
Image Provided by **Nguyen Cong Tri**

Nguyen Cong Tri is a self-taught visionary fashion designer based in Ho Chi Minh City. As a graduate of Fine Arts from the Ho Chi Minh City University of the Arts, he first impacted the world of Vietnamese design in 2000 when he won 1st prize in the 'New Idea' category at Vietnam's Grand Prix, with his *Green Leaves* fashion collection. We sit down with the busy designer to get his insights into the man and the industry.

It's difficult to be profitable in the local fashion industry, how have you achieved this and made a success of your brand? What would you advise other designers interested in doing the same thing?

"Wealth" is relative. My goal is to profit from my capacity, and how well I make money will change as my capacity changes. This is such an interesting journey, but people's journeys are not the same in the end; they have their various ways to go and their different destinations. My advice may not apply to others.

Do you believe that Vietnamese designers should draw on traditional garments like the *ao dai*, or other classic garments from across Asia? Or has the link to traditional designs actually hurt Vietnam's fashion industry and prevented it from moving forward?

If fresh and continual renovation is essential for the development of the fashion industry, then diversity is the same. Personally, I think that there shouldn't be a fixed route to bringing fashion to its next level. It is international; and yes, it has its own trends and standards; but it also brings with it the private spirits of its creators. For example, a good song has standards that make it good, but through different singers we have different emotions, and see its different spiritual sides. There should not be rules to control how singers should sing a particular song.

At this point in your career, is Vietnamese tradition at the core of your work in fashion, or are you reaching beyond your roots?

From where I stand, preserving tradition is a way to showcase one's level. As a designer, beyond the international trends and norms that I've been complying with in order to keep my work professional, I don't force myself to change that which is related to the "core." No matter what trends inspire my work, whatever I have created so far is surely no one else's but

mine. I always listen to and express myself, that comes naturally.

Considering that garments like the *ao dai* are strongly influenced by French dresses and Chinese *qi pao*, would you say that there is such a thing as a purity in Vietnamese clothing design? Or should the essence of Vietnamese clothing be seen as a blending of foreign influences?

I believe that the mutual influence and interaction among nations and fashion cultures is almost native, and indispensable in our age of cultural exchange. The question of whether there is "such a thing as a purity in Vietnamese clothing design" doesn't matter. What matters is the values Vietnam fashion has created to serve and to reach aesthetics. In my eyes, the *ao dai* will always be a beautiful symbol of Vietnamese women, and how it has altered through the ages to meet different requirements demonstrates its modern and fashionable elements.

Before achieving exposure in famous fashion magazines, how can designers like yourself showcase your work?

We live in a flat world where the power of the media's reach is more fairly distributed. As a businessman in the fashion world wishing to empower his own brand, you have to know how to showcase your own work to the public, from using personal social networks like Facebook through to broader strategies such as showing up at fashion weeks, or arranging to work with celebrities... I guess I am no exception.

In your opinion, why haven't Vietnamese designers still not made more of a global impact, given the rich creative resources of traditional designs?

My opinion is that "global impact" is basically rooted in the strength of the fashion industry of one's nation, not just of one designer or of a group of designers. The effort of the individual is undeniable, but we have to agree that a

country with a reputation for fashion and inner strength serves as a motivation for its designers to make a "global impact." I am not sure whether this is right or wrong, but even on occasions where achievements are normally thought to be personal, such as beauty contests, that may not exactly be true.

You recently created designs for Katy Perry and Rihanna. Have these high-profile clients brought more attention to your brand?

I admit that this has brought me some more gainful and beneficial elements to my portfolio for "global applications." This is also such a nice motivation for myself to improve and complete my own brand.

There have been many changes in the Vietnamese fashion industry since you first won an award for *Green Leaves* back in the year 2000. What changes have you seen in particular that have driven the industry ahead?

The biggest change came from consumers and improvements in their wearing habits. Though it's not so clear, an awareness of fashion and style has started to form. A small market has sparkled into being in the crowded cities, representing the needs of professionalizing the fashion business, firing up competitiveness between brands. Moreover, our recent contributions in global fashion have created more and more opportunities for learning and cooperation. This, with the passing of time, will motivate Vietnamese fashion to bloom.

What do you expect to see happening in this industry in the near future?

As I said, Vietnamese fashion industry is still slowly moving along its way to be fully manifest, and that's why each individual, no matter how long he/she has worked in the industry, has his/her own chance to reach the top. I hope Vietnamese fashion will bloom consistently with its own potential. ■



*My life
as a
fashion*

Text by **Nhi DQ Clarke**
Fashion Images by **Huynh Lam**
Portrait of Nhi by **Ngoc Tran**



I WAS BORN IN 1977 IN HAI PHONG.

As a child, I often helped my mother knit clothes and made home decor items to sell but I preferred to design my own unique clothing styles from old jeans and cloths we had around the house.

I loved painting and fashion but there weren't many opportunities to pursue them at the time so I took different jobs in sales and marketing while I was studying. I graduated in Business Administration from the Open University in Ho Chi Minh City. To get into fashion I have to go through a lot of work to accumulate both financial as well as business knowledge. At the same time, I had to independently study the basics of fashion and create my own process, from design to production. By 2008, when I had saved enough money, I created a fashion company with the first Umbrella store named after my favorite song—Umbrella is also an international name that has been registered for trademark.

I have chosen a slow and steady development strategy for Umbrella: the stores are always located in good locations on fashionable streets and in the most luxurious shopping malls in Saigon.

Almost all of my collections are inspired from everything in my life. It can be a lovely feeling in the morning in my quiet garden, emotions from a movie or when I'm traveling. My designs are sophisticated and modern—they must be unique, simple and comfortable.

Every season, our glamorous Umbrella lookbook is made by professional photographers and well-known stylists so that's why other clothing shops and tailors use it as a catalogue to copy off of. They can copy the style but can't create the detailed patterns and formulas as the original designer. Umbrella has its own body mass index to create the pattern ratios for each design. This is also the key to how Umbrella set its own style in Vietnam's fashion industry.

After 10 years of branding and development, Umbrella has a strong position and a large number of loyal customers. The world of fashion is an incredibly competitive place and anyone who succeeds there should be proud of their achievements. There is no reason for me to worry about others copying my designs or competition from younger designers.

I love my fashion design job because it's creative, fun, fierce and fast-paced, the fashion industry attracts hundreds of graduates every year, meaning you have to be fearless in order to get where you want to be. You can get rich or at least be able to live with the job, you are not only capable of making a product, it must be beautiful and more importantly, that you can sell it. Don't forget that this may come at the cost of high stress levels—it's important to weigh up the pros and cons before dedicating your life to a career in fashion. ■



designer

Wine & Dine

IMAGE PROVIDED BY MAD COW WINE & GRILL





Spread the Madness

A place where food has substance, big appetites are essential and the view is as superb as the service

Text by **Aliesha Duffin**

Images Provided by **Mad Cow Wine & Grill**

MAD COW WINE & GRILL sits on the 30th floor of **Pullman Saigon Centre** (148 Tran Hung Dao, D1), and the mood is set the moment you enter the restaurant: warm lighting, edgy urban decor, exquisite panoramic floor to ceiling windows and attentive, friendly staff who speak flawless English. The concept behind Mad Cow is simple—quality food and affordable wine in a relaxed atmosphere—and they've nailed it, it is so much more than just a hotel restaurant.

Tomahawk steak



ORDERING FROM THE A LA carte menu (they also had a lamb special and a tapas menu, both of which we will be going back to try) we opened with the Bouillabaisse (VND250,000), a provençal seafood soup with mussels, prawn, clam, seabass and squid. The seafood was piled high into a bowl and the broth poured over it at the table. Each element was cooked to perfection and the depth of flavor in the broth took us to the ocean, an ideal starter for the night.

The surf course was a melt-in-your-mouth Salmon steak (VND640,000) drizzled with pesto and served with garlic aioli and charred leeks. The salmon was rich and oily, nicely grilled on the outside, pink on the inside with a slight smoky flavor from the charred leeks. This was divine.

For our turf, we ordered the Tomahawk 1kg grassfed steak from the Mad Sharing category (including a choice of three sauces and two sides; VND2,4500,00) cooked rare. It's one of their most popular dishes and although it's labeled suitable "for two people," this steak could feed a small family. The humongous steak arrived with beautiful char-grill marks on the outside and, as requested, rare. For a bit of live-action dinner theater, it was carved at the table for us. We chose a hearty peppercorn, an airy truffle, and a rich and zesty blue cheese sauce to accompany the steak, all three were rich with flavors that elevated the steak to another level. The sides of mashed potato with bacon (who can resist bacon on top of anything?) and the spinach with mushroom and almonds were both well seasoned and complemented the steak. There was also a wide selection of mustards that came with the meal, as well as a whole roasted garlic, which when squeezed over the steak was a sauce in itself.

Despite our sizable feast, we wisely saved room for dessert. We opted to share one and settled on the Chocolate fondant (VND140,000), as there had been



rumours of a free flow chocolate, macaron and cookie box floating around. Visually, the dessert was gorgeous. A pot of decadent warm, gooey chocolate that was essentially indulgence in a bowl. With a side of creamy vanilla ice cream set upon a biscuit crumb and a buttery caramel sauce, I slipped into dessert heaven.

Mad Cow boasts the city's most accessibly priced wine collection, with 50 different handpicked wines to choose from, and with such a wide selection on offer we asked our waiter, Diep, for recommendations. We started off with a bold Australian Shiraz and then continued to sample a fantastic Argentinian Malbec, a Cabernet Sauvignon with hints of vanilla and rounded off the night with a glass of Yalumba antique tawny dessert wine. All the wines that we tried (and many more) are available at Mad prices by the glass (starting at VND85,000).

The service here is outstanding, turning a great meal into an extraordinary experience. The charming manager, Victoria, was involved in the concept-design and set-up of the restaurant, and her team has done a superb job. Every detail, from lighting and furniture to the menu (created together by Australian chef Danny Grimshaw) has been carefully considered. While only opened for six weeks there is already talk of expansion. Cheers to Mad Cow spreading its madness across Southeast Asia! ■





Put A *Fork* In It

Big flavors on small plates at this new tapas restaurant in downtown Saigon

Text by **Brian Jung**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

WHEN TONY FOX OPENED

his doors a month ago in the much loved but now defunct Portofino, it was with a specific purpose: bring something new to HCMC. As we sit under warm lighting in a cozy brick layered interior, we can't help but muse on the current state of the culinary scene in Vietnam. Needless to say, for Tony, in his 14 years of being in the scene, things have evolved—a lot. **FORK** (15 DONG DU, D1) is a clear

response to that— offering small plates (which I'm told is bigger than tapas) was at first, to me, sounded like a marketing gimmick. They aren't tapas but yet they offer small plates designed to be shared distinctly from Spain. This, of course, all changed once the first plate was delivered. Physically it was bigger, and so was the taste. With a predominately female wine-drinking crowd, **FORK** sits in a rather interesting niche that caters to shareable but diverse menu items. While mostly from Spain, the menu has a specials list that pulls from Tony's various culinary experiences as owner of Ciao Bella, Saffron, Twenty21One and Bleu.

The first plate was Ricotta gnudi (VND100,000). I was struck by the soft rice cake texture, filled with a fluffy light yet rich bodied cheese. What looks like a leaf was in fact a salty—bursting with flavor—garnish. The pool of soft butter and oil swirling languidly around it gave it a richer flavor. Next were Boquerones



(VND50,000), which are toasted bread topped with salty soft anchovy combined with tangy sweet piquillo peppers. Seems like an odd pairing for the non-Spanish inclined but the taste is that perfect mix of salty sweet tangy ending in a crunch from the toasted bread. The olive oil helps to bridge the flavors of the different contrasts, like a conductor of an orchestra. Parmesan rocket Ndjua (VND70,000) was next and I was immediately hit with spicy peppery flavors, reminiscent of a chorizo, but with a soft texture similar to pâté but coarser. While not so spicy at first it hits you later. The parmesan and rocket help to balance it.

One of Tony's specials and a dish he claims made him famous in the tapas world is the Korean spiced salmon (VND100,000)—a personal twist on the salmon, bagel, cream cheese— probably one of the most interesting tapas I've ever had. The spiciness is kept subtle with the soft texture and creamy taste of the salmon, then bam you're hit with a wasabi cream cheese that immediately pairs with the salmon followed by the light crispy crunch of the thin wafer below, which nearly buckled under the



Korean Spiced Salmon



Boquerones



weight of the massive amounts of cubed salmon. Delicious, and possibly my favorite of the night.

Next was an interesting combination of Sea scallops on miso risotto (VND160,000). It was cheesy and rich and reminded me of a mac n' cheese. Lightly seared scallops added a slight salty sea flavor, which helped to balance the rich cheesiness. Another small plate we ordered was Beef cheeks with cauliflower purée (VND160,000). The braised beef cheeks were so soft and my fork shredded it instantly as the fat easily spread out with the tender meat, while the purée was like a soft whipped mash and the gravy was deep.

The Crispy pork belly with mojo verde (VND110,000) was another favorite of the night. As any good pork belly should be, it was very rich, fatty, but the mojo verde helped to offset the richness. The crispy crunch of the skin was perfect. Probably the richest plate of the day, each bite needs an accompanying bit of mojo verde but irresistible and addictive. Last, but not least, was English blood sausage with melted leeks, chicken liver and marsala sauce (VND160,000). The chicken liver was slightly tense with a gamy flavor and richness that flooded the tastes. The blood sausage was perfect with the gravy, a bit salty but mellow and the texture came through nicely.

The end of the night was capped off by a flourless chocolate cake (VND100,000)—lightly chilled to the density of a fudge but not overly sweet. After the richness of the different dishes the sweetness was in itself a welcome.

It's easy to see Tony's experience and dedication to the craft. Each plate is carefully presented yet not overly pretentious. The flavors are well calculated, and in some cases surprising in its depth and layers. Each bite is a taste experience but offers enough size to satisfy even the hungriest eaters and still be pretty affordable. No doubt in my mind that FORK is already poised to be a fantastic success in Tony's portfolio of already envious restaurant brands. I'll be back for sure and ready to dig my fork in new dishes. ■

Raise the Roof

This recently-opened rooftop restaurant and bar combines delicious food and drinks with stunning views of the city

Text by **Nelson Daniels**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**



Tiramisu



Ham & Cheese Croquettes



Fresh Spring Rolls



Arancini

PROPELLER ROOFTOP RESTAURANT AND BAR (Rooftop, Bay Hotel HCM, 7 Ngo Van Nam, D1) recently opened this August. Nestled in the back of an alley, it is an ideal quiet escape in the heart of the city. Located at the top of Bay Hotel HCM, the rooftop bar is the perfect setting to enjoy an evening of cocktails and tapas with Saigon's stunning skyline as a backdrop.

Upon arrival we were greeted at the door and given an intimate corner table where we enjoyed a couple of cocktails and tapas while taking in the panoramic views of downtown Saigon. The menu offers a wide variety of classic and signature cocktails to choose from, and their signature cocktail, the Bay Mojito (VND99,000), was as good as the waiter's recommendation, and almost as strong. The addition of raspberry, gold rum and a 7up twist created a sweet, zesty cocktail I am looking forward to having again. The Classic Mojito (VND89,000) was mixed to perfection, tangy and refreshing, an excellent start to our evening.

The menu has a tempting selection of starters, tapas and mains to choose from. The first dish to come out was the ham and cheese croquettes with spicy tomato sauce (VND110,00). These have a delightful crunch on the outside, biting into the creamiest potato and then dipped in a spicy tomato sauce to

top it off. The portion is generous, and the combination of the salty croquette with the sweet yet spicy tomato sauce makes for an interesting mix of flavors. The arancini ("crumbed risotto balls" on the menu, VND100,000) are piled into a nest (literally, a straw nest!) on the plate, looking like scotch eggs. They are cooked to perfection, delicately seasoned and oozing with mozzarella and a zesty tomato chutney to really round out the dish.

The fresh spring rolls with pork dumpling (VND65,000) are an ideal refreshing side to go with the all the fried food on offer. They are stuffed with grilled pork and fresh rice noodles, and come with a superb fresh herb and bean dipping sauce that is bursting with flavor. The stuffed pita bread with seared pork, spicy sauce and tomato chutney (VND95,000) came out and straight away we can immediately tell that they are going to be delicious. The hot

homemade pita is filled with melt-in-your-mouth pulled pork and topped off with fresh salad. This dish is my favorite for the night.

It finally stopped raining (you can always trust Saigon to turn on the rain as soon as you want to leave the house), so for dessert we moved outside to enjoy the cool breeze on the stylish balcony. After stuffing ourselves full of tapas, the short sweet menu (tiramisu or seasonal fruit platter) didn't disappoint. The best decision for dessert was to split a tiramisu (VND60,000)—light and delicate—while at the same time providing intense flavors. The coffee soaked ladyfingers burst with flavors between bites of light and fluffy mascarpone and the tiramisu is delicately dusted with chocolate on top.

The service here is excellent, the staff were attentive without hovering and were happy to recommend drinks and tapas. Upon suggestion of the maitre d' Phuc, we choose a bottle of red wine to accompany our tapas (wine menu available on request). He suggested the Argento Malbec would pair well with our selection of tapas, and he was right on the money. The wine was fantastic and complemented every dish.

Propeller is open Monday to Sunday from 6pm to midnight. Happy hour is from 6pm-8pm and offers buy one get one free for wine, cocktails and beer. Wednesday is ladies night with 50% off on drinks and if you are heading there in a group you get a free fruit platter or snack.

With such amazing service, food and drinks all with a panoramic view of Saigon, it's easy to imagine that Propeller could be the next hot spot. ■





Med Flavors

Lebanese spices
give lunchtime
a much-needed
boost in flavors

Text by **Grant Hawkins**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

WHEN SEARCHING FOR FINE dining with a peaceful, outdoor setting in the heart of District 1, you're likely to find yourself in the at *hem* 74 Hai Ba Trung, or "the courtyard" as it's often referred to by expats. And if you've had the pleasure of finding yourself there, then the festive sounds and sights along with the delicious smells of **Beirut Mediterranean Kitchen & Lounge** (74/13D Hai Ba Trung, D1) is unmissable. Serving authentic Mediterranean flavors in an oasis-like outdoor covered garden—complete with shisha and belly dancers—Beirut goes beyond fine dining and is truly a unique and unforgettable experience.

After opening a second location in Hanoi, now they've opened a dining room for lunch right next to the garden. An open space, but still air-conditioned, the interior is cleanly decorated and subtly accented with Arabic designs. Diners can sit at the bar or table, and there's ample seating for small groups too. The menu is a slightly pared down

version of the dinner menu, prepared in the same kitchen, at a more affordable price to match the more casual setting. It's a perfect spot for business lunches within the central business district.

We started with two glasses of the House red, a chilled Pudu Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile (VND128,000 per glass). Our wine was accompanied by the charming Chef Chady Bayram. Born in Beirut, he's lived and worked at various five-star hotels across the Middle East and Asia, and is currently comfortably settled in Saigon. He's enthusiastic about the international culture of Saigon and takes pride in bringing his authentic Lebanese cuisine to the country.

According to Chef Chady, the best way to judge a Mediterranean



Beef Kebab Plate



Falafel Kebab Sandwich

tried the Falafel kebab sandwich (VND78,000) filled with delicious, homemade tabbouleh and is served on warm pita. It was a perfect mix of crunchy falafel with soft pita, cold veggies in a warm crunchy shell.

The overall impression is a simple, efficient lunch prepared carefully and exactly from top-quality ingredients. All dishes were light yet filling ensemble. Everything mixes well together, and it's perfect for sharing with a friend or small group. The food came very quickly, and the atmosphere was comfortable and casual. The menu is also vegetarian-friendly with all

dishes including a vegetarian option.

In an increasingly diverse and multicultural city, "the courtyard" stands out as a special sort of melting pot. While enjoying some of the city's finest culinary offerings, you'll be treated to a mosaic of sight, smell and sound from Europe, Asia and the Middle East. On the perfect night you might hear music from four corners of the globe seamlessly interwoven, just like the people who have brought it here. With the continuing excellence of the nighttime experience and the new lunch offering, Beirut is a welcome voice in the international chorus that is Saigon. ■

restaurant—from Marrakesh to Medina—is the hummus. "It's just chemistry," he says. "If the kitchen can master hummus, they know what they're doing." From this patron's experience, Beirut passes the test.

The Hummus chickpeas (VND58,000), served with warm pita bread, was brought out right away. It's creamy and savory, and surprisingly light on the stomach. Drizzle on some olive oil for a more authentic Mediterranean feel, and try your best to leave room for what comes next. This was accompanied by a bowl of Lentil soup (VND38,000), which was perfectly seasoned and beautifully presented, and ideal for cleaning up the extra pita bread.

Our main dishes arrived within minutes. The Chicken and beef kebab plate (VND118,000) is served with fresh tomato slices and sautéed peppers and onions on a bed of jasmine rice, with tahini on the side: a simple dish with fresh ingredients, smartly seasoned and well-presented. We also



Lentil Soup



Meet

Text and Images Provided by
Pullman Vung Tau

BORN IN THE BLACK FOREST region of South West Germany where his career began. From there, Chef Stephan worked at several luxury hotels & resorts in European, Asian, Middle Eastern and African countries as well as ultra luxury private yachts cruising around the world before starting his new journey in Vietnam. He believes that talent, creativity, great leadership and teamwork are all integral elements to ensure the success of the hotel's food and beverage activities.

Executive Chef

Stephan A. Dellner

The Chef of the Chefs at the Pullman Hotel & Resort and Convention Centre Vung Tau

Share with us your dream of becoming a chef.

Cooking has been a childhood dream of mine, as I loved watching my mother in the kitchen. I think that cooking is an art and just as with other arts, you can give different emotions to people. You can change the raw material and create amazing tastes and flavors that give different sensations and emotions. This fascinates me. I knew back then that I wanted to not only cook at home, but to also have a career in this field and become a Master of the Chefs.

What brings you to Vietnam?

The first time in 2003 was wanderlust, the curiosity of another culture and diversity that I got to know. My first trip to Vietnam changed my life; after becoming crazy for Southeast Asia, it just seemed like another planet and it never let me go again. I love Vietnam for the flavors, the landscape and the people. Going to Vietnam the first time was life-changing for sure; maybe because it was all so new and different to my life and to the world I grew up in. The food, the culture, the landscape and the smell; they're all inseparable.

Deep sea diver scallops served my way with almonds romane baby corn and Madagascar vanilla



How did you adapt to the new culture?

Living in a culture that is different from your own can be an exciting adventure and challenging at the same time if you are open-minded and curious like me. Adjusting to a new culture does not mean that you have to change your own but it is important to respect those of other people.

How do you find Vietnamese cuisine?

Vietnamese food is one of the most varied and seductive on the planet—a delicious mix of the food of its colonial visitors and age-old exotic native flavors, diversity of spices and techniques have influenced Vietnamese cuisine.

It tends to be less spicy, lighter, fragrant and fresh. Meals are leisurely affairs, with many shared dishes served all at once. The cuisine contains the brilliant balance of aromatics, heat, sweetness, sourness and fish-sauciness. As with other Asian cuisines, it's all about the yin and yang; the sweet and the salty, the cooling and the warming, the fresh and the fermented. It's a stunning combination that always surprises and delights, that's what keeps people coming back for more.

What new elements will you bring to Pullman Vung Tau's wining and dining experiences?

My mission is simple, to make dining the heart and soul of Pullman Vung Tau, and of the local community; by delivering a dining experience that is excellent, relevant and authentic. I believe food should tell you a story. Whether it is about the farmer just 5km down the road who pours his heart and soul to ensure you received the freshest, highest quality products or about the local meat supplier who gives you the best and healthiest cuts because he share the same vision as you. Healthy food is not a luxury, but is readily available to every customer and built into the core of everything we do.

Please share with us upcoming special activities in the hotel.

Every Friday, Saturday and public holidays we present our guests with a large variety of fresh and live ocean and



CAN YOU SHARE YOUR THOUGHT ON VIETNAM'S CURRENT CULINARY LANDSCAPE? AND WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WILL BECOME IN THE FUTURE?

We are now seeing century old culinary tradition fused with modern twist. I don't foresee any major change of the naturally stapled diet with core elements of the cuisine inspired from the abundant natural sources of the country. From the rice that grows in abundance along the vast deltas of the Red River & Mekong and the plentiful sources of fresh fish and seafood that is caught daily from the never-ending coast that lines the country, it is safe to say that these elements are here to stay. However, what we are seeing

now is that Vietnamese people are more conscious about their health, particularly what food they are eating, where the products are coming from, how it was farmed and if their farming methods were sustainable or not. Restaurants have to be more creative to what they are putting on your plate, and care much more about where they are sourcing their produce from just to remain competitive, as always this added competition leads to a richer dining experience for the customer.

river fish and seafood at our Riviera Restaurant, cooked in different styles to choose from including outside BBQ and an assortment of international desserts. Our motto is "eat as much as you can."

Recently, we opened our new bakery cafe Sweet&Co. with the finest pastries, cakes, sundae cups and bubble tea selection, which is unique in Vung Tau. We will then present our new chocolate promotions and pralines selection.

The hotel's main lobby with "The Junction" concept will soon showcase an innovative, cosmopolitan bar menu with a very modern touch. That's the beauty of working with a team of experts, as you have the talent and expertise to present authentic cuisine and cocktails to our local and international clientele.

Explain "Iconic Culinary Destination."

Welcome to the new age, where people now go somewhere because they want something different, they want an experience and they want it to be simple yet memorable, where Michelin-star restaurants sit empty and the local food vendor has a line around the block. Look at HCMC for example; it is without a doubt the absolute capital of cool, where restaurants have seamlessly fused designs mashed into the urban landscape, where you sit in a collective of creative hangouts nibbling from a plethora of local and international cuisines. HCMC is, now more than ever iconic, simply because it offers such a variety of eclectic culinary destinations that no-where else can offer. This is what I hope we can be known for here at Pullman Vung Tau. ■

For more info, visit www.pullmanvungtau.com



Night Sweets

Text and Images by **Ngoc Tran**

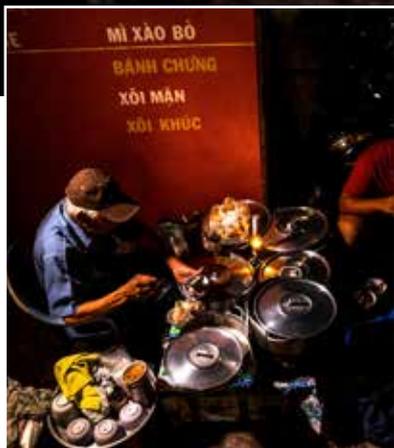




AS NIGHT FALLS, THIS STREET side *che* shop on 504 Nguyen Kiem in Phu Nhuan, is cast in white shimmering florescent light from the overhead street lamp. For over 40 years, using additional oil lamps to illuminate the different kinds of desserts on sale, Mr. and Mrs. Tu can be seen satisfying late-night sweet cravings from 7pm to midnight.

The single, no-fuss menu is taped to an electricity pole and all *che* are VND5,000 for a small bowl or small plastic takeaway pouch. Don't expect tables, waiters and white linen napkins here: Grab a very short plastic stool, find an empty spot and tell the "grandparents" what you want—you're treated like family here.

"I have been eating at this *che* place since I was a kid and lived down the alley, and even though I live pretty far now I still come here for my desserts. They're delicious," says Tuan. ■





Com Chay

(Vegetarian Rice in Lotus Leaf)

Originally from Hue, this dish was served to emperors who demanded creative gourmet dishes for every meal. It is now cooked at temples throughout the country, as the lotus is rich in Buddhist symbolism.



With an eye for visual beauty as well as a discerning palate, **Ngoc Tran** has undertaken to collect and present *Easy To Cook: 40 Delicious Vietnamese Dishes As Listed By CNN*. Ngoc has personally traveled around her native Vietnam in search of the most outstanding variety of every recipe featured in her book. Find her book at all Phuong Nam bookstores (nhasachphuongnam.com) or on Kindle at Amazon



1 Wash the lotus seeds, then boil in cold water with a little salt until soft.



2 Defrost the frozen vegetables. Soak the shiitake in water until it expands. Slice thinly.

INGREDIENTS

SERVES: 2

- Rice 200g
- Lotus seed 50g
- Frozen mixed vegetables (found at the supermarket) 100g
- Shiitake 5
- Shallot 2
- Lotus leaf 1
- Salt, pepper enough
- Vegetarian seasoning salt enough
- Cooking oil 2 tbsp

Sauce

- Soy sauce 2 tbsp
- Chili 1



3 Steam rice then let it cool.



4 Stir-fry the chopped shallot with oil in a pan



5 Add diced vegetables, sliced shiitake, lotus seeds and steamed rice. Stir-fry for 10'. Add salt, pepper and vegetarian seasoning salt to taste.



6 Put the rice onto a lotus leaf and wrap it up like a package. Leave for 15' for the flavors to infuse. When ready to serve, open the leaf and serve hot with soy sauce and chili. ■



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.uineinvietnam.com.

DO Navarra

Spanish wines that will make you feel young again



Traditionally, Navarra has been making outstanding rosé wines, mostly from Grenache grapes, fresh fruity vivid wines. However, over the last two decades young wine makers have been making a revolution with the wine production in Navarra, making totally different wines, sometimes using not-so-common grapes and blends, but especially focusing on quality and taste.

One of these new wineries is Aroa, situated in the Yerri Valley, it makes only organic wines, and is one of only eleven wineries to obtain the Wineries for Climate Protection certificate. Its star wine, Jauna, has won over 30 international gold and silver medals, and was awarded 92 points by Robert Parker; an unusual blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, Tempranillo and Merlot aged for 14 months in oak, it is a perfect example of the top quality wines that this area can produce.

Other wineries like Ochoa in Olite, tend to produce more classic wines, building on Tempranillo and Grenache grapes. Solid wines, more traditional, still delicious.

Apart from quality, perhaps the most important characteristic of Navarra wines, is that as they are mostly unknown outside their production area, they tend to be rather cheap, delivering amazing value for money, making them a real bargain.

Although the new wine trend seems to come around aging wines in oak, similarly to Rioja or Ribera del Duero, don't miss the young wines, especially those made from Grenache or Chardonnay, as they have lots to offer: freshness, delicacy and usually a fruit explosion, making them very easy to drink and to enjoy. ■

NAVARRA IS SITUATED IN THE North of Spain, at the western end of the Pyrenees, where it shares a 163 kilometre stretch of border with France. The entire Navarra DO (Spanish Denominación de Origen (Origin Denomination)) lies south of the area's capital city, Pamplona, which is famous for its annual Running of the Bulls.

The area sits in the shadow of the Pyrenees—Navarra is part of the historic Basque country—but the Ebro River has the most impact on winemaking.

There is a particular confluence of different climates in Navarra (Atlantic, Continental and Mediterranean from north to south) and this combined with a range of soils, altitude, sunshine and rainfall in an area that's only 180 km north-south and 90 km east-west, allows for this small region to produce a variety of wine styles from many different grape varieties.



Wine & Dine



ROOFTOP BARS



Liquid Sky Bar

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

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



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

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

141 Nguyen Hue, D1



Social Club Rooftop Bar

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

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

SUNDAY BRUNCHES



Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

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

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



Le Meridien

Centered around three distinctive dining venues - Latest Recipe, Bamboo Chic and Latitude 10 - Le Meridien offers three brunch packages, prices range from VND1,500,000 to VND2,500,000 and include Oriental and International cuisine.

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 6263 6688 - ext.6930
www.lemeridienhanoi.com



BAR & CRAFT BEER BREWERIES



Acoustic Bar

A place to catch some high-quality live music in a lively atmosphere. Plus, the frequent rotation of performers means that even the most regular of patrons are kept on their toes.

E1 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Aperitivo

Cosy, friendly, and chic, with a quality cocktail and wine list, delicious deli sandwiches by day and night, Aperitivo is a great place to relax and unwind after work.

80B/c Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2.



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

CHINESE



Dragon Court

The well-heeled Chinese certainly go for luxury and this venue has it in spades. Situated in a classy location just opposite the Opera House, Dragon Court features a broad selection of dishes from across the spectrum of mainland cuisines, making this an ideal a-la-carte venue as well as the perfect spot for Dim Sum.

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
028 3827 2566



Dynasty

New World's own slice of Canton with a particularly fine Dim Sum selection, Dynasty is a traditional lavishly-styled Chinese venue with flawless design. Authenticity and a sense of old-world China make this one of Saigon's more refined options for the cuisine. A number of private rooms are available.

New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, D1
028 3822 8888
www.saiгон.newworldhotels.com



Kabin

Dine Cantonese-style by the river at the Renaissance Riverside's own Chinese venue decked out with flourishes reminiscent of classical Qing period tastes. Kabin's cuisine is known for presenting new takes on traditional dishes as well as for its more exotic fare.

Renaissance Riverside Hotel,
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 3822 0033



Li Bai

Thoroughly traditional Chinese venue at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers offering choice oriental delicacies against a backdrop of fine Chinese art. This opulent venue, open throughout the day, is one of the city's more beautiful restaurants in this category.

Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3827 2828
www.libaisaigon.com



Ming Court

The best in Chinese cuisine with a unique Taiwanese focus in a Japanese hotel, Ming Court is classy in its precision and graceful without compromise. It's certainly one of the city's most impressive venues for fans of the cuisine, and nothing is left to chance with the venue's signature exemplary service standards.

3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1



San Fu Lou – Cantonese Kitchen

San Fu Lou combines tradition with our Chinese kitchen and sophisticated contemporary Oriental ambience. San Fu Lou exudes colors and cozy feel of a traditional Chinese "house". Our open kitchen, which is a first in Vietnam for a Chinese restaurant, allows diners to take in a visual feast before the food is served.

SAN FU LOU I
Ground floor, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
(+2848) 38239513

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

An old mainstay on the Chinese cuisine trail with well over a decade in operation, Hung Ky Mi Gia is known for its classic mainland dishes with a focus on delicious roasts. Safe and tasty Chinese food.

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
028 3822 2673

Ocean Palace

A place for those who love Chinese food. The large dining room on the ground floor can accommodate up to 280 diners. Up on the first floor are six private rooms and a big ballroom that can host 350 guests.

2 Le Duan Street, D1
028 3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

The brainchild of an overseas Chinese/Vietnamese architect who wanted to build something extraordinary in his home town, this venue combines the architectural features of seven world heritage structures blended into one. The cuisine is just as eclectic with representative dishes from several major Chinese traditions.

12 Duong 26, D6
028 3755 1577
www.7ryquan.com

Shang Palace

Renowned as one of the finest restaurants in the city, Shang Palace boasts mouth-watering Cantonese and Hong Kong cuisine served in a warm and elegant atmosphere. Whether it be an intimate dinner for two or a larger group event, Shang Palace can cater for three-hundred guests including private VIP rooms. With more than fifty Dim-Sum items and over two-hundred delectable dishes to choose from, Shang Palace is an ideal rendezvous for any dining occasion.

1st Floor, Norfolk Mansion
17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, D1
028 3823 2221

Yu Chu

Yu Chu is renowned for the quality and presentation of its authentic Cantonese and Peking cuisines along with its elegant décor. Watching the chefs prepare signature dishes such as hand-pulled noodle, Dim Sum and Peking Duck right in the kitchen is a prominent, popular feature.

1st Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon, Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
028 3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

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



Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.caferunam.com



Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



K.Coffee

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

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM.
Sunday closed.
86 Hoang Dieu, D4
38253316 / 090 142 3103



La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

The cafe is located on the top floor and resembles an inner city warehouse. The best seats are by the windows where you can watch the traffic zoom by. 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 Terroir

Recently opened, Le Terroir serves dishes such as Bouchée à la Reine duo, Pan seared salmon along with pastas, risotto and decadent desserts. The wine list here is an oenophile's dream with over 200 labels in stock from Australia, California and Chile to Italy. The restaurant is on two levels with a small terrace in the ground floor.

30 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



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



Long Phi

French-owned, this longstanding restobar has been a favorite among late-night revelers because of its late opening hours - 4am. The menu is a combination of Vietnamese and French with pasta dishes thrown in to cater to everyone.

207 Bui Vien, D1



Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com



Also Try...

La Cuisine

A cosy restaurant just outside the main eating strip on Le Thanh Ton, La Cuisine offers quality French food in an upmarket but not overly expensive setting. Suitable for special occasions or business dinners to impress. Regular diners recommend the filet of beef.

48 Le Thanh Ton
028 2229 8882

La Nicoise

A traditional 'neighbourhood' French restaurant, La Nicoise serves simple, filling French fare at exceptional value in the shadow of the Bitexco tower. Most popular for its steak dishes, the restaurant has an extensive menu which belies its compact size.

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
028 3821 3056

La Villa

Housed in a stunning white French villa that was originally built as a private house, La Villa features outdoor tables dotted around a swimming pool and a more formal dining room inside. Superb cuisine, with staff trained as they would be in France. Bookings are advised, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings.

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
028 3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

Trois Gourmands

Opened in 2004 and regarded as one of the finest French restaurants in town. Owner Gils, a French native, makes his own cheeses as well.

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
028 3744 4585



INDIAN



Ashoka

A small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandooris.

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1
33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2



Ganesh

Ganesh serves authentic northern Indian tandooris and rotis along with the hottest curries, dovas and vada from the southern region.

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



Natraj

Known for its complete North & South Indian cuisine, Natraj's specialty is its special chaat & tandoori dishes. Parties, events & catering services are available, with Daily Lunch Thali and set menus. Available for delivery. Complete menu on Facebook.

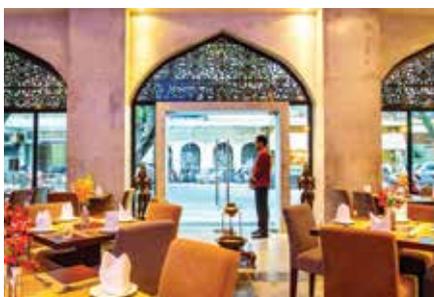
41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
028 6679 5267 - 028 6686 3168
www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine



Saigon Indian

Saigon's original Indian eatery is still going strong, located in a bright, roomy upstairs venue in the heart of District 1.

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Bui, D1



Tandoor [®]

Tandoor has recently moved to a new location. The restaurant serves authentic South and North Indian cuisine, with set lunches available, in a spacious dining area. Offers free home delivery and outside catering. Halal food.

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1
028 3930 4839 / tandoor@tandoorvietnam.com



The Punjabi

Best known for its excellent tandoori cooking executed in a specialized, custom-built oven, Punjabi serves the best of genuine North Indian cuisine in a venue well within the backpacker enclave, ensuring forgiving menu prices.

40/3 Bui Vien, D1



HEALTHY,
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Weekly order, 🚚 7a.m-10:30a.m, Mon-Fri
Daily delivery 9p.m-10:30p.m, Sun-Thu



👉 fitmeal.vn
f facebook.com/fitmealvn

📷 instagram.com/fitmeal.vn
✉ fitmealvietnam@gmail.com



HEALTHY FITMEAL PLANS FOR BUSY LIFE!

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



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



La Hostaria

Designed with an intimate atmosphere invoking something like an Italian town, this venue focuses on traditional ethnic Italian cuisine (rather than the ubiquitous pizza and pasta), creations of the skillful executive chef – straight out of Venice. The place lights up on romantic Thursday evenings with candlelight and light music.

17B Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3823 1080
www.lahostaria.com



Portofino

Great place for pizza's, pasta's and interesting main dishes in a cozy setting.

15 Dong Du, D1
+84 28 3823 3597
info@portofinovietnam.com
<http://www.portofinovietnam.com/>



NO.1 Pizza In The World

"Pizza is not meant to be tasted, but to be eaten". We aim to make pizza a more familiar dish in Vietnam. Come try our specialties, pizzas cooked in wood-fired oven, roasted chicken prepared in rotisserie oven, mouth-watering beef, or pasta dish for crab lovers.

From October 2rd to October 20th (17:00-21:30) ladies have a chance to win a lucky draw to get a 50,000vnd voucher.

Lot L5-18, 5F Saigon Centre, 92-94 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia St., D.1, HCMC
(028) 3821 8319
pizzalogic.hcm@gmail.com
<http://pizzalogic-hcm.com/index-vn.html>
 Fest.vn or call 1900636997

Pizza
LOGIC
 HO CHI MINH CITY



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

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

Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spawned 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

Carpaccio

Often unfairly mistaken as a purely tourist dining destination, Carpaccio offers an extensive range of Italian fare, especially seafood and beef dishes. The dining area is in a distinctively curved brick 'tunnel' opening into a large room at the rear, making it ideal for couples or groups.

79 Hai Ba Trung
028 3823 8998



JAPANESE



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



SORAE Sushi Sake Lounge

"Sorae" - Up in the sky, is one of the most spectacular Japanese restaurant and a "must go" destination at the heart of the bustling busy district of Saigon. Located in the heart of District 1, on the 24th floor of AB Tower, it has a gorgeous 360 degree overview over to the city. Sorae can accommodate up to 368 people in a spacious 1,000 sqm elegant setting including a bar with hundreds of varieties of beverages and the finest cigar club in town. Besides offering delicious Japanese cuisine, Sorae delights its guests with great entertainment and DJ.

Level 24, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai St., Dist 1, HCMC
028 3827 2372
<http://www.soraesushi.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Soraesushi/>
Weekend Brunch at only VND 680,000
Fest.vn or call 1900636997
www.libaisaigon.com



Sushi Dining Aoi

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

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



Yoshino

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

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



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



Lee Cho

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

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



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 Bui, 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 Bui St. D1
028 3823 7506

Thai Street

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

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

The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with rooky 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 Bui, 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

STEAKHOUSE



Corso Steakhouse & Bar

The steakhouse boasts an open kitchen with private dining areas. With an extensive wine menu, contemporary Western and Asian cuisines and a wide range of sizzling steaks cooked to your liking, this is the ideal choice for a special celebration or formal business dinner.

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3829 5368
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn



El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse

The fine dining steakhouse boasts a modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambiance and genuine atmosphere. The authenticity of the Argentinian cuisine is strictly followed by the methods of preparation, hand-made charcoal grill serves as the focal point in the kitchen to maintain and accentuate the original flavor of the meat.

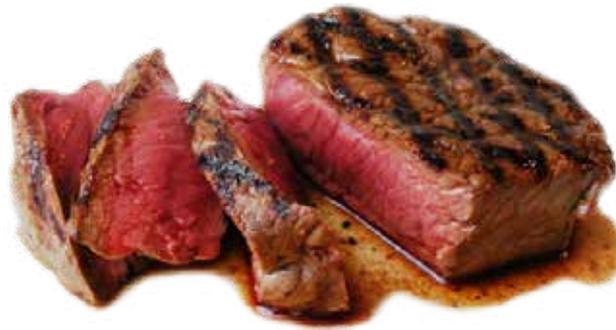
74/1 Hai Ba Trung, D1



New York Steakhouse

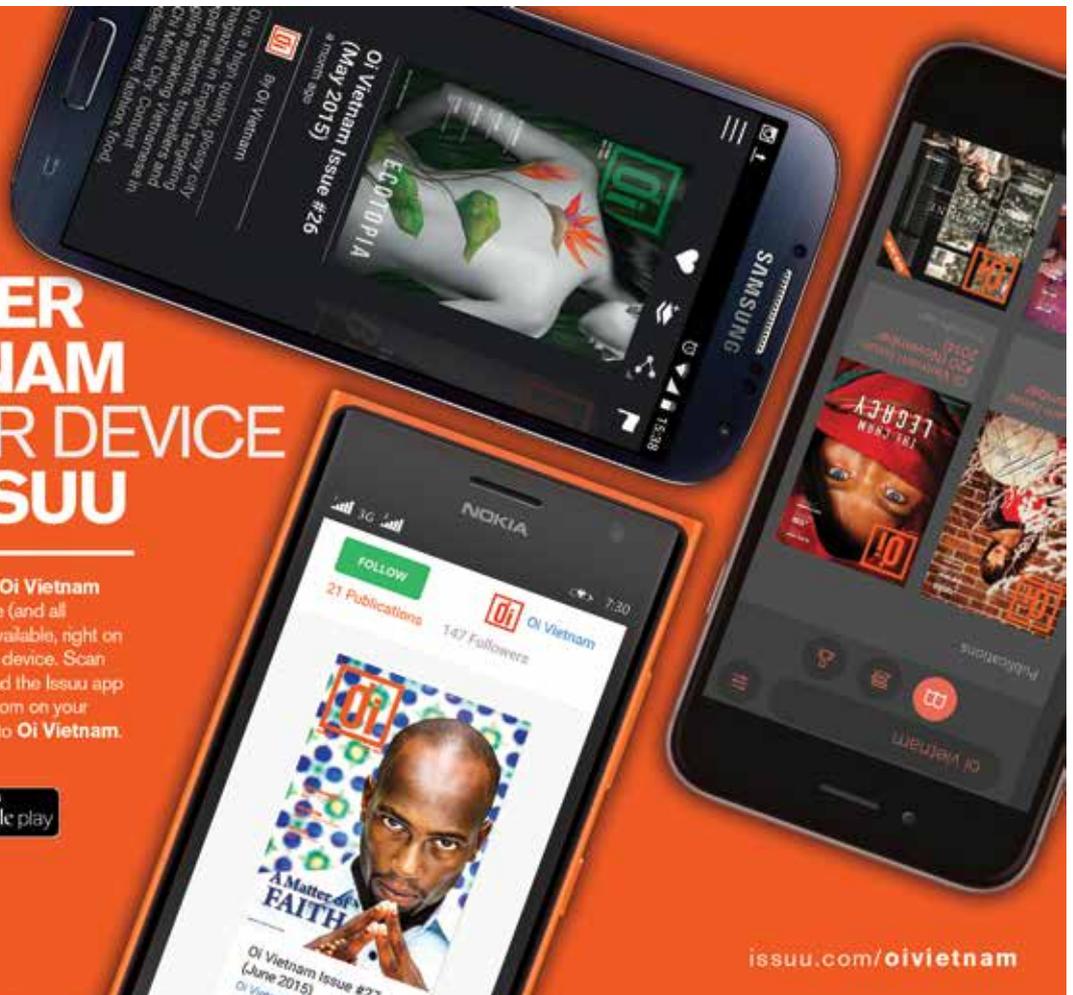
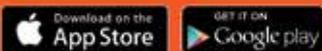
New York Steakhouse is definitely in the upmarket category and serves exclusive American imported beef dishes, with a whole range of steaks from rib eye, New York strip steak and tenderloin being popular options.

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1



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VIETNAMESE

Fest.vn **FEST**



Five Oysters

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



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



Ngoc Chau Garden

Generally, Ngoc Chau Garden is genuine authentic Vietnamese Restaurant with simply beautiful food. They concentrate on traditional food of South Viet Nam, especially home-cooked, value for money. There for, the food, drink and the atmosphere make you comfortable during family's meal time. It's a really nice blend as you're setting into Ho Chi Minh City and Viet Nam.
116 Ho Tung Mau, phuong Ben Nghe, quan 1, Tp.HCM.
028 6687 3838
<https://facebook.com/ngochaugarden.hotungmau>



Nhà Hàng Di Mai

Every family has a unique recipe which is handed down from generations and perfected to create that hearty comfort food. Our customers can relive having home-cooked food experience as our signature recipes are crafted with passion and tradition. Every meal is a delight in Di Mai. Explore the culinary journey of traditional authentic Vietnamese flavors set in an open kitchen, modern contemporary design.
136 - 138 Le Thi Hong Gam St., Dist. 1, HCMC
028 3821 7786
nhahangdimai.com
<https://www.facebook.com/nhahangdimai/>



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



The Hue House

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



Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

Tasty BBQ venue situated above Temple Bar. The venue has a traditional, rustic theme with old-style furniture and a quaint Vietnamese decor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.
Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
028 3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

Fun Vietnamese-style creperie popular with locals and expats alike for its tasty, healthy prawn pancakes, along with a number of other traditional dishes.
46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

If you do only one thing, you'd better do it well – and this venue does precisely that, serving only traditional Hanoian Cha Ca salads stir-fried with fish and spring onion. Delicious.
36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

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

Cuc Gach Quan

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

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

Nha Hang Ngon

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

Temple Club

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

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

INTERNATIONAL



Bamboo Chic

Bamboo Chic serves an inventive menu of Japanese and Chinese dishes and creative cocktails. Open for dinner, the contemporary space features modern velvet chairs with purple and plum pillows and dramatic beaded chandeliers inspired by the Saigon River along with live music from the house DJ.

Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel
3C Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 6263 6688
www.leremidien.com/saigon
 For restaurant promotions go to fest.vn or Call 1900636997



Hotel Equatorial HCMC

New Vietnamese Bistro & European Grill Menu At "Chit Chat at the Café"
 The new menu features the Chefs' flair for creativity with international inspiration from Europe and Asia. This special execution can be experienced in the new a la carte menu which includes imported steaks, meats, and seafood.

242 Tran Binh Trong St, Dist. 5
028 3839 7777
<https://hochiminhcity.equatorial.com/>



Hungry Bunny

Hungry Bunny is a new American Bistro situated in the heart of Thi Nghe neighborhood in Binh Thanh district. The restaurant's main focus is gourmet Burgers such as the Bacon Clubhouse and Bacon & Blue burger. Other offers include breakfast, soups, salads, sandwiches and pastas. There is one main dining area downstairs with two smaller rooms upstairs that offer guests with more privacy and great views. Come enjoy our great selection of American diner food with a glass of cold beer.

8am-10pm / Tel 028 2229 0011
01 Nguyen Cuu Van street, Binh Thanh district
www.hungrybunnybistro.com
www.facebook.com/hungrybunnybistro



Panam - The Backroom

Panam is a cozy restaurant and pub with a friendly and chilled ambiance. If you're searching for a place to meet up for happy hours after work, Panam is the perfect choice. Come and enjoy great food like falafels and kebabs with homemade sauces, cold craft beers, cocktails and board games.

12pm-1am / Tel: 0122 733 0235
91 Pasteur, D1
 (in a side alley behind Cuba la Casa del Mojito)



Poke Saigon

Poke is a traditional Hawaiian dish made with fresh, cubed raw fish and toppings. Poke Saigon is the first poke restaurant in HCMC where diners create their own bowl. Located on the second floor of an apartment building, the dining space reflects the menu: fresh, fun, creative and healthy. There are many different options for your poke bowl with bases that include sushi or brown rice, including mix-in sauces like wasabi mayo and goma sesame and toppings such as wakame seaweed salad, crab salad and poke options: ahi tuna, salmon, shrimp and more. We are available for delivery.

Tue-Sun 11 0am-8pm
2nd Floor, 42 Nguyen Hue, D1
0902474388
<https://www.facebook.com/pokesaigon/>



Saigon Kitchen Club

Saigon Kitchen Club specializes in fresh, healthy and perfectly-portioned meals delivered to your home or office. They offer a variety of packages: Full Day, Lunch, Family and Weight Loss. The ingredients used are 100% pure olive oil, brown sugar, brown rice and strictly no MSG; giving diners exquisite and healthy meals.

Place order through the website:
www.saigonkitchenclub.com or call 0888.629.788



Saigon Social Space

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Travel & Wellness

TAIWAN / IMAGE BY DAVID MULLER





Touring Taiwan^{on} Company Time

Uncover the beauty of Taiwan with its surprising blend of modernity and tradition

Text by David Muller & Julian Ajello

Images by David Muller



A TREND FOR VIETNAMESE

companies in recent years is the yearly staff getaway. Long, holiday weekends are the favored calendar dates. When this phenomenon first appeared around five years ago, companies traveled to scenic spots in Vietnam like Dalat, Hoi An and Ha Long Bay. Today, the more exotic and far away the location the more prestige it brings for employees when they discuss their job with friends and family.

Our company chose the long Independence Day weekend to tour Taiwan. Nearly two decades ago, at the tender age of 19, I journeyed to Taiwan and spent almost three years there studying Mandarin in the capital

of Taipei. The opportunity to go back always stirs nostalgia for me.

Taiwan has a colorful history; its indigenous community is thought to have traveled from the Polynesian islands some 5,500 years ago. Its former name Formosa, meaning 'beautiful island,' was coined back in 1542 by Portuguese sailors. The Dutch set up a trading post called Zeelandia on what is present day Tainan for the Dutch East India Company in 1624. It lasted 38 years before it was sacked by the Ming Loyalist Kongxinga who then set up the Kingdom of Tungning. Later, the Japanese would occupy Taiwan for half a century from 1895 to 1945, with their regional capital in Taihoku.

They left a cultural footprint of pristine manners, a fondness for hot springs and their language, which many of the older generation still speak fluently.

After WWII, the Chinese reclaimed Taiwan and renamed the capital Taipei. During the 1960s and 70s Taiwan transformed into an economic miracle along with Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea. These four countries became known as the Asian tigers—around the world their economic models are still studied as leading examples on ways to advance a less developed country's standard of living. Today, Taipei is a bustling metropolis with an advanced public transport system that helps shuttle its population of 2.7 million



consumer goods, this is the place to sample Taiwan's famous snack foods such as oyster omelettes, skewered chicken, beef and squid, or the infamous smelly tofu whose odor can waft and fill the nostrils from two streets away.

Taiwan is not without its larger-than-life personalities dotting its history as well. The Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-shek memorial halls pay respect to Taiwan's founders. These two attractions are free to enter. Impressive, the monuments sprawl across expansive plots of land in the center of the city. Every hour visitors can watch the changing of the guard in the great halls. Chiang Kai-shek's memorial hall

shares Liberty Square with the National Concert Hall and National Theatre, where local and international orchestras, ballet troupes and Chinese opera perform on a regular basis.

Xinmending is a shopping district where hip Taiwanese youth meander to hang out, shop, eat street food and get the occasional tattoo. Clothing stores turn a brisk trade; there are designer stores on street level as well as basements and lofts that shouldn't be missed. Coffee shops can be found on many street corners and the traditional teahouse is hard to find in these modern times.

Taiwan produces a lot of tech gadgets. Guang Hua and Syntrend



people effortlessly around the city.

The National Palace Museum located in Shilin district is a treasure trove of Chinese antiquities. Said to have over 700,000 pieces in its collection, the museum updates the exhibition throughout the year. A tourist can experience a complete picture of China's 8,000-plus years of culture by touring the museum halls for only USD8. Its prize possession is the Jadeite Cabbage, a single, solid piece of flawless jade carved in the shape of a Chinese cabbage with crickets and cicadas resting on the outside leaves. After having one's fill of art and history, the Shilin night market is a short walk from the museum. A bustling collection of food stalls and





Creative house multiple levels of cameras, laptops, phones and accessories. Taiwan's tax free shopping is a holiday in its own right for tourists. Just remember to take your passport with you so the shop assistant can fill in the form for refund at the airport upon your departure. For luxury items such as jewelry, watches and designer bags the 101 Taipei Building and surrounding district is your destination. The 101 held the title for the world's tallest building from 2004-2010 and is still listed by Guinness as having the fastest elevators on the planet.

If you're traveling during the cooler months, spend a few nights in Bei Tou. Still within the city limits, it can be

reached by subway. Here you can check into a specialty hot springs hotel and soak away any lingering travel fatigue. Some of the hotel rooms even have special themes reflecting Japanese or European decor.

Outside Taipei, Sun Moon Lake is Taiwan's largest body of water and is situated in Nan Tou County. In the past, before people regularly took international flights, Sun Moon Lake, like Dalat, was a honeymoon destination for locals. The lake derives its name because the east side of the lake resembles the sun and the west resembles the moon. Cruising boats depart the pier and circle around Lalu Island in the lake's center. During



the early morning, mist swirls around the peaks on either side of the lake, resembling a scene from a Chinese watercolor painting.

Ali Shan National Scenic area is a picturesque mountain range in Taiwan's central Chiayi region. The region is a blaze of color in the spring cherry blossom and autumn seasons. The high-altitude mountain tea plantations produce Taiwan's finest green teas, such as Ali Shan Oolong. Traveling to the mountain town of Fengchihu on



the Ali Shan Forest train harkens back to when the Japanese built the railway to transport the gigantic cypress trees, prominent in the mountains.

Hualien in Taiwan's eastern area contains one of Taiwan's most spectacular national parks, Taroko Gorge. The Liwu River cuts through solid marble leaving the weathered stone looking like layered Taiwanese sweets and giving Taroko its nickname, the Marble Gorge. There are many hiking trails inside the national park,

which are ideal to explore on day trips. Hualien's outskirts boast a privately-owned guesthouse and restaurant with a stunning turquoise lake surrounded by pine groves called the Hualien Bear Forest.

Taiwan has many small islands, such as Penghu and Green Island, within reach using small twin prop engine planes or slower ferries. These islets are home to small fishing villages scattered along rugged coastlines and beaches. During Typhoon season, intense storms

batter them halting all services to the islands, so it's best to confirm seasonal weather before planning a trip.

Whether it's a weekend company getaway to Taipei or a two-week adventure covering the entire island, Taiwan's friendly population, high tech modern cities and abundant natural scenery has much to offer travelers. Only a three-hour plane ride from Ho Chi Minh City, Taiwan lives up to its former name and is truly a beautiful Island. ■

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Kids & Education



Make It Personal

Help learners take control of and manage their own learning

Text by Jennifer Hawkins



AS I LOOK AT THIS SCHOOL YEAR, one of the trends that I see becoming more apparent is student use of personal learning environments (PLEs). Essentially, a PLE is the collection of go-to tools that learners can access to help them with whatever task they are working on as part of their learning. It may not receive the same air time in education technology circles as virtual reality or 3D printing, but a well-designed PLE has the potential to improve the workflow, effectiveness and academic results of all students.

I first started considering the importance of this idea a few years ago. Back in 2010, I was given some grant money by Independent Schools Queensland to run a project that looked at how effective the iPod touch was as a device to aid learning in middle years science.

I had a class of 25 students and gave

each of them an iPod to use both in class and at home for the year. After a fair bit of research, I came up with a list of about 20 apps that I wanted the students to use on their devices throughout the year. As well as these apps, I told them that they could download any other apps that they thought would be useful in their learning.

After a few weeks, there was a huge variety of applications that students had chosen to use on top of the ones that I had recommended. I had listed a particular app for studying the periodic table. Between the students in the class, they had downloaded six or seven different versions, all convinced that their version was superior for one reason or another. I did not mind—they all had the same information that I needed them to access for the year 9 chemistry unit. The differences were in the color, the detail, the use of images, the linking to further information and so on. Multiply this



by the variety of apps across the other concepts that we were studying as well as more general tools like calculators, organisers, stop watches and notepads and I had a class set of devices that had become very personal to the learning style and workflow of each user.

Fast forward to 2017 and the possibilities for PLEs are much broader. Easily accessible content has changed the dynamic in many classrooms. Students can look up facts in seconds and are becoming very good at doing so. The focus has in many cases shifted to tasks of inquiry, analysis and evaluation of information. Students are asked to interact with concepts in a variety of ways that are now possible due to the technology that they have at their fingertips. How successful students are in terms of this interaction with information often correlates to how well they will understand the underlying concepts. This is where an effective PLE can be so valuable.

For example, a student is working on a research assignment. As he is

visiting a large number of websites, he might choose to use a bookmarking tool such as Diigo, which uses tags to help him efficiently retrieve particular pieces of information. He might use the audio recorder on his phone or tablet to quickly record ideas that come to him throughout the day. He might use OneNote Learning Tools to read his assignment back to himself to make sure that he has used correct grammar and the paragraphs flow.

A student that is revising for a test might use a particular app to help him create flash cards, or use a concept mapping tool like Bubbl.us to help him piece parts of a concept together. Depending on the task, students may use a large variety of tools as part of their PLE. Having their own system and a stock of tools that work for them will make their PLE successful.

A couple of months ago, a student was showing me the YouTube channels that she subscribes to. There were the various music and reality TV channels, but she also subscribed to a variety of

science and humanities channels that she said had helped her understanding of the subjects that she was studying. Her YouTube subscriptions formed part of her PLE.

One of the challenges from a teacher's point of view is that a PLE is personalized. The collection of tools that work best for one student might not be suited at all to another student. This means that it can be quite difficult for a teacher to provide the most useful set of tools to the students that they teach. Teachers do have a role in encouraging the use of PLEs though. It is more important that a student develops a system than uses any particular tool. They may be using a great image editing tool now that suits all of their image editing needs. Next week, however, they may come across something even more efficient and the old tool is replaced. Knowing that they need to use that type of tool for a particular purpose and knowing that they have one in their tool box is what is important.

In many schools, teachers guide students by providing them with particular tools by default. This may be because they are a one-to-one that supplies all students with a particular device. The software and apps on that device are easily accessible and will often be used. A bring your own device (BYOD) school will have a greater variety in terms of the hardware and potentially allow students to bring devices that are more suited to their learning. (There are a variety of reasons why this does not always happen.)

Schools that are using Office 365 or G Suite for Education are providing easily accessible tools for a variety of uses. Students in maths classes at our school were very impressed with the amount of time that they saved this year by using Office 365 Forms for data collection. Many will use this for future assignments when they need to collect primary data. Forms has now become a valuable tool in their PLEs.

The Learning Management System that schools choose will also provide default tools for a variety of tasks. Students will use this for accessing class content, out-of-class discussions, group collaborations and more. These tools will be common in the PLEs of students across the school.

The number and type of tools that a student might need in their PLE is dependent on many factors, such as age, subjects studied and preferred learning styles. Teachers can get their students thinking about the way that they learn and the types of tools that will help them in their learning. Teachers should encourage students to collect a set of tools and become efficient at using them. They will continually update their PLE to suit where they are on their learning journey, but becoming effective at using their tools will give them a better chance of achieving the skills that will be needed to be successful at school and beyond. ■



THE FUTURE CLASSROOM

Ditching assigned seatings in favor of beanbags and standing desks

Text by Jonathon Roberts



FLEXIBLE LEARNING SPACES HAVE been the buzzwords of industry for many years now and it appears this concept has developed from a 'nice idea' to the current directional norm. Riding the momentum of laidback start-ups, companies and schools across the world are reinventing their spaces to try to engage employees and students in new and comfortable ways.

Traditionally, a classroom has a central focus in the form of a whiteboard with all furniture facing in the direction of this knowledge source. Students are seated in various arrangements including rows, columns or, in some cases, groups. This model has proven effective for generations and students have sat quietly and accepted the teacher's word as truth, so why then do we need to challenge this archetypal classroom?

Classrooms are starting to look more like coffee shops with the traditional central focus being replaced with smaller meeting groups and spaces. One large whiteboard has become multiple smaller boards dispersed around the room and tables have been raised and lowered to create variation. A teacher's goal of achieving a perfect classroom of matching tables and chairs has changed to a celebration of variation as students find comfort on couches, bean bags, sit/

stand desks, pillows and deck chairs. Tables and walls are being painted with whiteboard paint and square classes are being divided into smaller meeting areas where students can recline and interact with each other.

With all this change from the traditional rule, school leadership is now faced with the decision of integration of this new classroom design. Is this way of learning here to stay and worthy of a large investment or would small changes to the classroom suffice as we await the next classroom vogue?

Before any change is ever considered, schools must consider the implications for those who matter most: our students. How is a change in furniture going to support student engagement and learning?

Through the Spaces Research Project, Kariippanon et al. (2016) discovered that the primary driving force behind the changes made in schools was the recognition of the need to adapt pedagogical approaches to better meet the needs of 21st century learners. Executives and teachers spoke of moving away from didactic teaching and embracing student-centred learning, collaboration, peer teaching and self-regulation to improve students' engagement, motivation and





learning outcomes. It is important for schools to understand that a colourful, flexible learning space does not equate to better learning. If changing the furniture is the school's only answer to meeting students' needs, it will find itself with nothing more than an attractive and expensive mirage.

So how can teachers form flexible learning spaces within their own classrooms? No matter what the budget, adjustments can be made to cater for 21st century learning. Below are some suggestions for how to create flexible learning spaces in your school.

Shoeless Learning

Shoeless learning spaces are becoming



more common throughout the world due to the significant links to concentration levels and behavior; however, it is still unknown why this works. In China, it is believed to have links to reflexology, in India being shoeless is linked to respect and in Western countries to feeling more like home. Whatever the answer, classes and schools around the world are reaping the benefits of going shoeless both in individual classes and as whole schools.

Write-on Surfaces

Another trend within classes that is going viral is the write-on surface. This is another simple and affordable modification that can be implemented in any classroom to assist students' learning. Being able to write on surfaces is not just about convenience for children, instead it gives them a sense of audience and purpose. Their work is available to the whole group or class and is visible for everybody that enters the room. While writing in books is private, writing on a surface in full view of everybody adds to classroom conversation and allows everyone to become more aware of each other's work. This adjustment can be through purpose-built furniture or by painting your current walls and desktops with write-on paint. Windows and whiteboards scattered around the room are also useful for small group work or for students to write their ideas over. While whiteboards are fluid workspaces with work constantly being erased, students and teachers can take photos to keep records of their work on their digital devices.

Indoor plants

Another simple adjustment is to introduce indoor plants into the learning space. Plants provide many benefits to learning spaces besides their visual appeal. Students have noted that plants provide a calming atmosphere and make the classroom feel more like home. In a space that can often feel clinical and generic, plants add a softer touch and a tangible, textural change from the usual flat and shiny surfaces. Indoor plants also work hard to purify the air within your workspace by providing more oxygen, removing toxins from the air and releasing moisture through photosynthesis. Plants have also been linked to increasing focus and relieving stress.

Standing Desks

Humans are not made to sit for extended periods. For decades, research has been telling us that being sedentary for long periods of time is detrimental to our health both physically and mentally. This is especially true for children who are naturally active and wanting to move. It has even been discovered that students who are living a sedentary lifestyle may experience poor academic achievement and low self-esteem. Providing tables that allow students to stand increases students' movement and interaction. Standing desks that are purpose-built can also be moved and adjusted easily to suit a range of different heights. Not

all students enjoy standing all day, so providing a group of standing and sitting desks provides students with options to change as needed.

Alternative Seating

Along with standing desks, students also like to change seating styles. Classes have adopted a range of different seating styles to allow flexibility and diversity in where and how students work. Couches, beanbags and rugs have encouraged students to get down on the floor and into more comfortable positions and to create different learning environments that replicate a café-style setting. While sitting in a beanbag is not going to be ideal for neat handwriting, it may provide a change in atmosphere for a student to sit with a laptop or for group conversation. Flexible seating options that can be easily moved allow for better collaboration and can vary with different group sizes.

Wall Displays And Color

As a teacher fresh out of university, my first impression of classrooms was that there was a correlation between the number of displays and the quality of teaching. Rooms were filled with posters upon posters and art hanging from every surface of the room. Not only were posters rarely ever referenced, they were overstimulating and claustrophobic. Many teachers are now opting for the 'bare walls' approach, choosing instead to paint walls in a pleasant color that encourages creativity and comfort. The key to creating an environment that promotes learning is to ensure classes are not overstimulating. Overstimulation is usually caused by large displays in bright colours, especially reds and oranges. Conversely, colors such as green and blue promote a calming, relaxed and creative environment. A simple way of adding color to a room is to add pillows, pots or furniture in chosen colors.

Flexible learning spaces work because teachers and schools have adapted their approaches to meet the needs of 21st century students. They have adapted their lesson structure, changed their methods of assessing, accepted appropriate technology and ultimately allowed noise all in the pursuit of creating an environment that will support and nurture a generation of students that require a different education.

In a world that requires adaptation, flexible learning spaces are here to stay and will continue to evolve as research reveals the benefits of collaboration and project-based learning. Schools that elect against this movement, I fear, will be left in the back room beside the overhead projector and dusty textbooks. ■

Jonathon Roberts is an educator currently working in both primary school and university. His passions involve 21st century learning and integrating technology in meaningful ways to create stimulating and engaging spaces for students to learn in.

Nothing to Sneeze At

Flu season is year round in Vietnam, which means it might be time to schedule your flu shot



EVERYONE GETS THE FLU NOW AND THEN. You know the symptoms—sore throat, fever, coughing, a runny nose, and a lack of energy that will likely see you bedridden for a couple of days. Most people call this the flu, which comes from the word “influenza”—but for doctors, that word refers to a very specific group of viruses that are a particularly dangerous subset of the various common colds and flus we’re familiar with. While many countries undergo an annual flu season, Vietnam doesn’t have one; you can get it at any time of the year.

True influenza is actually a very specific and serious respiratory infection that can result in hospitalization and death. The most common complication of influenza is bacterial pneumonia, but it can also aggravate chronic diseases such as asthma, chronic rhinitis, and diabetes. It’s a highly contagious viral infection transmitted by coughing, sneezing, or contact with someone who is infected, and it can also be transmitted by direct contact if you touch surfaces on which infected influenza droplets have landed. After being exposed, it usually takes an average of two days to develop symptoms, but it can range from one to four days. Typical influenza disease causes the onset of fever, headache, a runny or stuffy nose, eye pain, and sensitivity to light. Kids may also suffer from nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

The fact that it spreads so easily is what makes it such an important health problem. People become contagious from the very beginning, one or two days before the onset of symptoms—so you can be contagious even though you don’t yet know you have it. You can still pass on the virus to others for the next four or



Dr. Kate Naumova, who is from Moscow, focused on Pediatrics early in her career, drawn by her love for children. She joined Family Medical Practice in 2014.

five days after the onset of symptoms.

The virus group falls into three basic categories. There are two common types, which we label A and B. There's also a C-type, but it's detected much less frequently and is only a mild infection. At our clinic we use nasal swabs to test for A and B—influenza A can cause a moderate to severe illness in all groups, and affects people and some animals; while influenza B causes mild disease and usually affects only humans.

Once you're infected, there's no going back. The virus will collect in the upper respiratory tract, producing phlegm in the airway in response to the inflammation of the surrounding organs. Your immune system (provided it's functioning normally) will start to detect the presence of the virus multiplying in your body, and get to work on developing an antibody to fight it. The symptoms you experience are a combination of the spread of the virus and your body's countermeasures, which will cause inflammation, fever and discomfort. Once your body has produced these antibodies, you'll be protected from reinfection—and if you ever do contact the same virus again, it will be swiftly and invisibly dealt with.

So how is it that you can get the flu again and again? It's not just that there are different types of influenza (your antibodies to type A influenza won't work at all against influenza B); it's also that each virus type gradually morphs into different forms as it spreads, making it resistant to antibodies that worked against it before. This means that every time the body catches a new strain of influenza, it must start from the beginning.

How can people protect themselves

from a shape-shifting disease that keeps turning out new forms to infect us again and again? Firstly, we can try our best not to put ourselves and others at risk in the first place, considering how virulent this illness is. For a start, remember to cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands often with soap and water—and if you're not near water, you can also use alcohol-based hand cleansers. Stay away from people who are sick as much as possible. If you already have influenza, you should stay at home from work or school for at least 24 hours after the fever has ended.

Secondly, there is specific medication for influenza—tamiflu, which protects against both A & B type influenza. If you suspect you have been infected, tamiflu is very useful if taken during the first 48 hours after coming into contact with the virus, significantly reducing recovery time and preventing complications of the illness. Unfortunately, it's largely ineffective during the later stages of infection.

The best way to prevent influenza, of course, is vaccination. Because the strains of viruses change every year, pharmaceutical companies conduct research to find out which strains will be typical for the coming season worldwide. According to their results, they produce a new vaccine to match the circulating strains. Every year, we receive new vaccines that are different from the older ones and more effective against the forms of influenza that are likely to be ascendant during the following 12 months.

In accordance with international supply, we usually receive our annual vaccines in October, which is the best time to get vaccinated. We use

an inactivated vaccine (made from killed viruses) produced by Influxac that doesn't cause the disease. Unlike some vaccines, Influxac does not contain eggs, meaning those with egg allergies (including pregnant women) can take it safely. This vaccination is given intramuscularly, and it usually contains three or four types of viruses considered to be the most dangerous in the coming year. It will protect you only from the more common strains of the influenza virus, however—if you're unlucky, you could still contract a less prevalent strain.

It is my recommendation that all people aged six months and older should get the influenza vaccine, unless they suffer from an immunodeficiency condition. Kids under six months old should not get vaccinated because they're too small—usually at that age, however, the mother is breastfeeding, so she can pass on some immunity to the baby if she is vaccinated. It's recommended that everyone in a family with a baby should get vaccinated while the baby is still too young to receive or develop its own antibodies. It's also important to note that kids under eight years old who receive their first-ever flu vaccine should get two shots one month apart to fully trigger their immune response.

If all else fails and you do get influenza, it's simple: drink a lot of water, rest, stay at home, and don't go to school or work. Take some medication to treat the fever and symptoms, and wait for your body to beat the disease. The most important thing is to keep to yourself, and don't pass it on to anybody else—that is ultimately the best way we have to contain this sometimes lethal virus. ■



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Residential Area No.5, Thanh My Loi Ward, D2
028 3742 STAR / 028 3742 7827
www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

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Also...

Australian International School (AIS)

The Australian International School is an IB World School with three world class campuses in District 2, HCMC, offering an international education from kindergarten to senior school with the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), Cambridge Secondary Programme (including IGCSE) and IB Diploma Programme (DP).

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
www.aisvietnam.com

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

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

Saigon South International School

Founded in 1997, Saigon South International School seeks to accommodate an increasing need for American education for both local residents and expatriate families. SSIS enrolls over 850 students in Early Childhood – Grade 12 from over thirty-three countries in a spacious six-hectare, well-equipped campus.

www.ssis.edu.vn

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www.montessori.edu.vn



The American School

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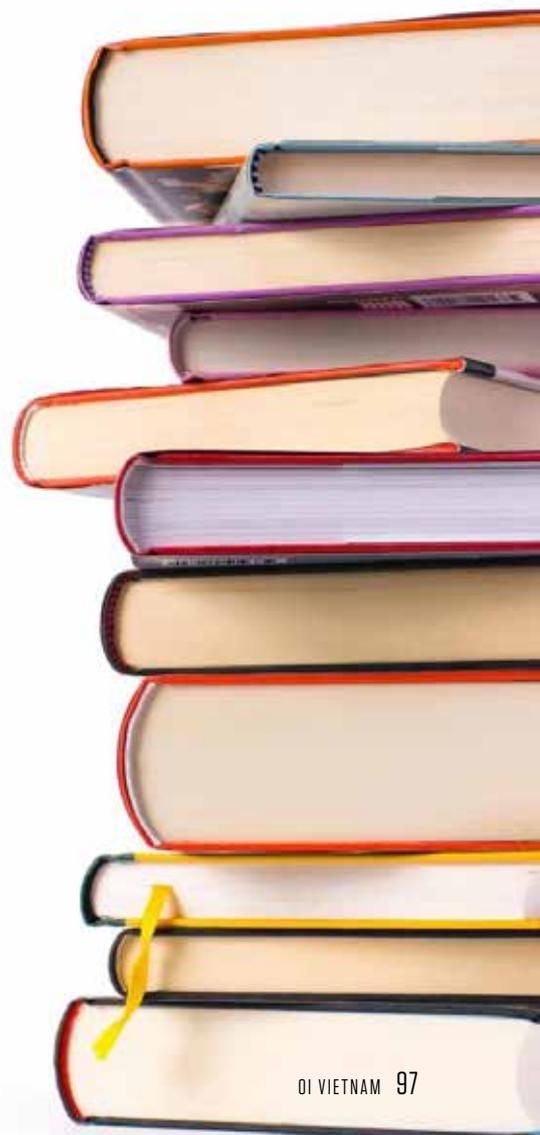
School ages: 18 months to 9 years old. WMS is a standard international Montessori school offering nursery, kindergarten and lower elementary program by North America Montessori Curriculum covered with 100% English environment (for children from 18 months to 9 years old). Where the best integration of this philosophy and practices happen, we are proudly an active member of American Montessori Society. "Free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world." Maria Montessori

Campus 1:
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www.wonderkidsmontessori.edu.vn

Campus 2:
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