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VIETNAM 05-2018

MY LIFE AS A BIRD ARTIST

Capturing The Beauty
Of Birds In Ink

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HIP TO BE SQUARE

Conquering An Endless
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A BODY AT REST

Finding Body Bliss
In The Old Capital

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I LOVE YOU, I HATE YOU

Helping Kids With
Digital Detox

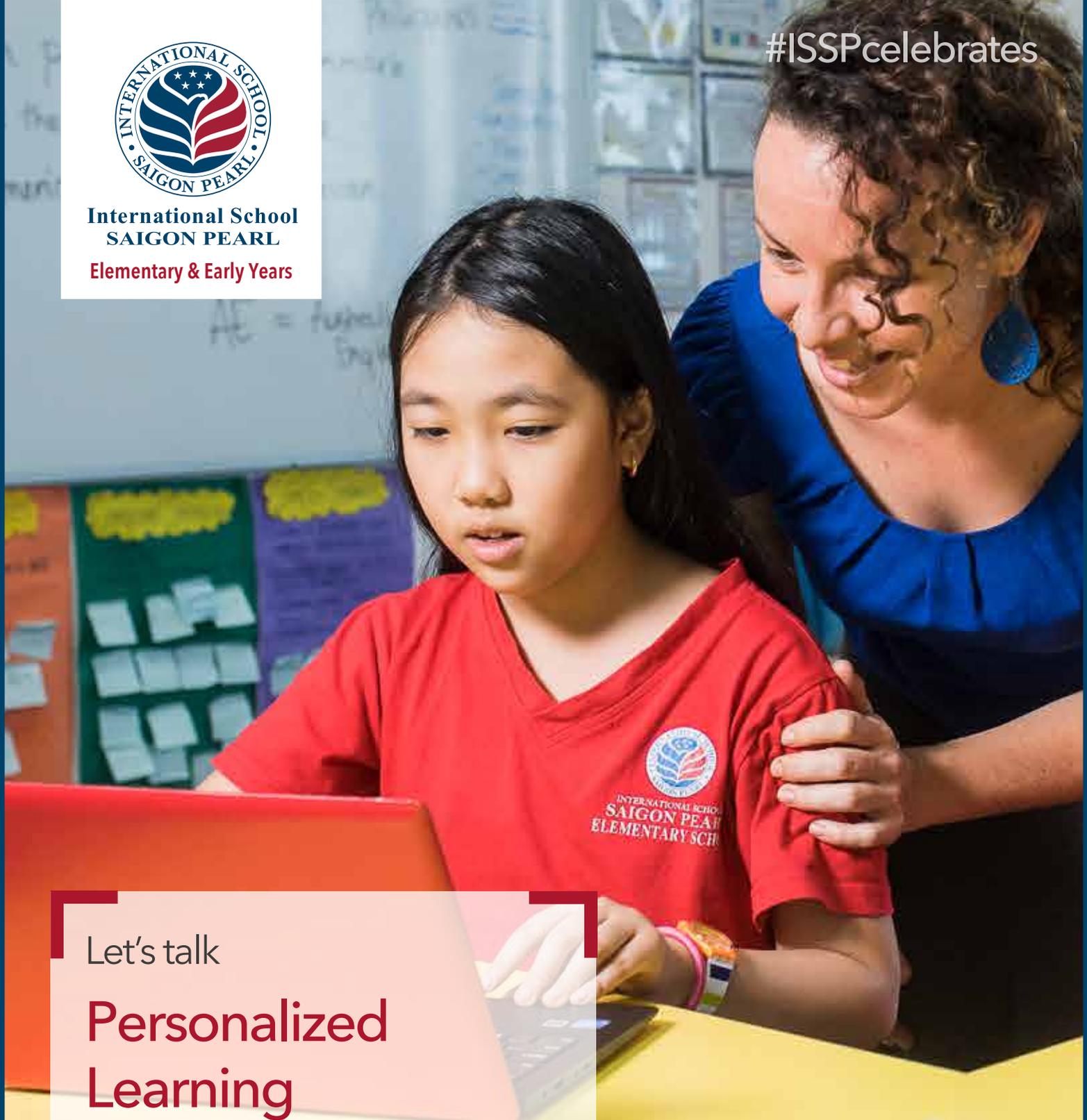
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Giám đốc, Tổng biên tập

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Biên tập: Tạ Quang Huy

Thực hiện liên kết xuất bản:

OI VIET NAM MEDIA & ADVERTISING CO.,LTD

14 D1 Đường Thảo Điền, Phường Thảo Điền, Quận 2,

TP. Hồ Chí Minh

Số lượng 6000 cuốn, khổ 21 cm x 29,7 cm

Đăng ký KHXB: **739-2018/CXBIPH/11-31/TN**

QĐXB số: **204/QĐ-TN**

ISBN số: **978-604-966-163-1**

Chế bản và in tại

Công ty TNHH In - Thương mại Trần Châu Phúc

262/8a Lũy Bán Bích, phường Hòa Thạnh,

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Datebook

What's on this month...

MAY 12

What: Ugly Duckling Presse

Where: inpages (4 Le Van Mien, D2); 3pm-6pm

About: Meet Daniel Owen, Publicity Director of the Ugly Duckling Presse, a nonprofit publishing collective based in Brooklyn, New York. In this talk, Daniel will discuss the history and working practices of Ugly Duckling Presse (UDP). Since its humble beginnings in 1993 as a xeroxed zine of poetry and collage, UDP has become an internationally known publisher of poetry, translations, essays, experimental fiction and non-fiction, performance texts, and books by artists, appreciated for the look and feel of its productions which underscore the materiality and labor of printing and bookmaking.

Contact: Visit inpages.org/visit-us for more info

MAY 19

What: MASD Charity Bazaar 2018

Where: BP Compound (36 Thao Dien, D2); 2pm-6pm

About: The bazaar will be offering a range of products with everything from clothes and accessories to delicious food stands. Simultaneously, a raffle contest will be running where great prizes can be won all in support of Make A Small Difference. Thanks to the many sponsors and supporters, prizes include, but not limited to, a stay at InterContinental Saigon, vouchers to some of the best restaurants in Saigon, as well as to multiple spas and much more.

All of the proceeds will go to MASD's selected projects.

The upcoming projects include the installation of a water filtration system to transform rain water into clean drinking water for the children and staff, as well as constructing a new kitchen in a daycare center in the Mekong Delta. The daycare center accommodates and provides food, healthcare and education for approx. 50 children whom have no safe place to go during the day.

Contact: Visit www.make-a-small-difference.com for more info

MAY 19

What: The Legend Lives On

Where: Saigon Opera House; 8pm; ticket are VND650,000, VND500,000, VND200,000 and VND80,000 (students only)

About: It's in two parts. First comes a symphony, *Legend of the Spring*, by contemporary Vietnamese composer and stage manager for the HBSO company, Nguyen Manh Duy Linh. Then, after the interval, the HBSO Ballet will dance the work entitled *The Legend Lives On*, with music by the company's Music Director Tran Vuong Thach, who will conduct the whole evening.

Tran Vuong Thach was born in 1961 and was originally a violinist. He studied in the Netherlands and Belgium, and has been the HBSO's principal conductor since 1996. He was honored with the title of Meritorious Artist in 2006.

Nguyen Manh Duy Linh studied composition in Russia in the early years of the 21st century. As well as acting as stage manager for HBSO ballet and opera productions, he also lectures at the HCMC Conservatory of Music.

Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info

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MAY 19

What: BBGV "Royal Party" Charity Ball

Where: Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon (2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1); 7pm-10pm

About: Put on your party attire to celebrate the Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle with a live broadcast from Windsor Castle and then dress like a Royal from Around the World and join the Royal Party Charity Ball. Enter the fancy dress competition with prizes for best male, best female & best table, win great prizes including flights to Europe or accommodation vouchers with the raffle for charity.

Contact: Email anh.ho@bbgv.org for more info



MAY 21

What: 2nd Annual Transport Infrastructure 2018

Where: Park Hyatt (2 Lam Son Square, D1); 8am-5:30pm

About: The conference provides a platform for transport/ infrastructure developers to understand business opportunity throughout Asia Pacific Region, to access and analyze the market trends in the transport & infrastructure industry across the globe, to comprehend functions included to tackle the diversifying market. This summit is a hub of discussion for investment in transport development, engaging the governing bodies, Infrastructure developers, Architects and interior-designing firms to collaborate and implement the foundation for growth and development.

Contact: Visit www.icham.org for more info



MAY 25



What: Techsauce Roadshow 2018 In CLMV

Where: Ho Chi Minh City

About: This year Techsauce Global Summit is upping its game, boosting attendance from last year's 6,000 to 10,000 this year. Representation will be more global as this year's Techsauce roadshow covers 20 cities including the Oceania region. The countries are Shanghai, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, South Korean, CLMV, Vietnam, Taiwan, Australia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Israel and Thailand. Partnering with Egg Accelerator Saigon, Techsauce Roadshow will head to Ho Chi Minh City to find what startup from CLMV countries that has what it takes to compete on the final pitching stage at Techsauce Global Summit 2018 on June 22-23. The prize is worth it for startups gathering at Techweek on May 25, 2018. A round trip and accommodation to Techsauce Global Summit offers winning startups a chance to win not only the grand prize of USD8,888 but meet over 300 investors, 200 members of the media, and representatives from 30 countries.

Contact: Visit summit.techsauce.co for more info

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118 Hoang Hoa Tham street, Ward 2, Vung Tau City

Facebook: Nocello Restaurant - Bar - Coffee

Website: www.nocellorestaurant.com.vn

Email: nocellorestaurant@gmail.com

An advertisement for Italiani's restaurant. The background is dark red with a faint pizza pattern. The text 'Italiani's' is at the top. Below it, a white-bordered box contains the text 'HOMEMADE WOOD-FRIED PIZZA'. Underneath, it lists 'PIZZA - PASTA - WINGS - BEER'. At the bottom, it provides the website <http://italianis-pizza-han-thuyen.business.site>, the TripAdvisor logo, the address '17 Han Thuyen st, Ben Nghe ward, district 1, HCMC', the phone number '090 145 31 94', the Facebook page www.facebook.com/italianispizza2/, and the opening time '10:00am - 10:00pm'.

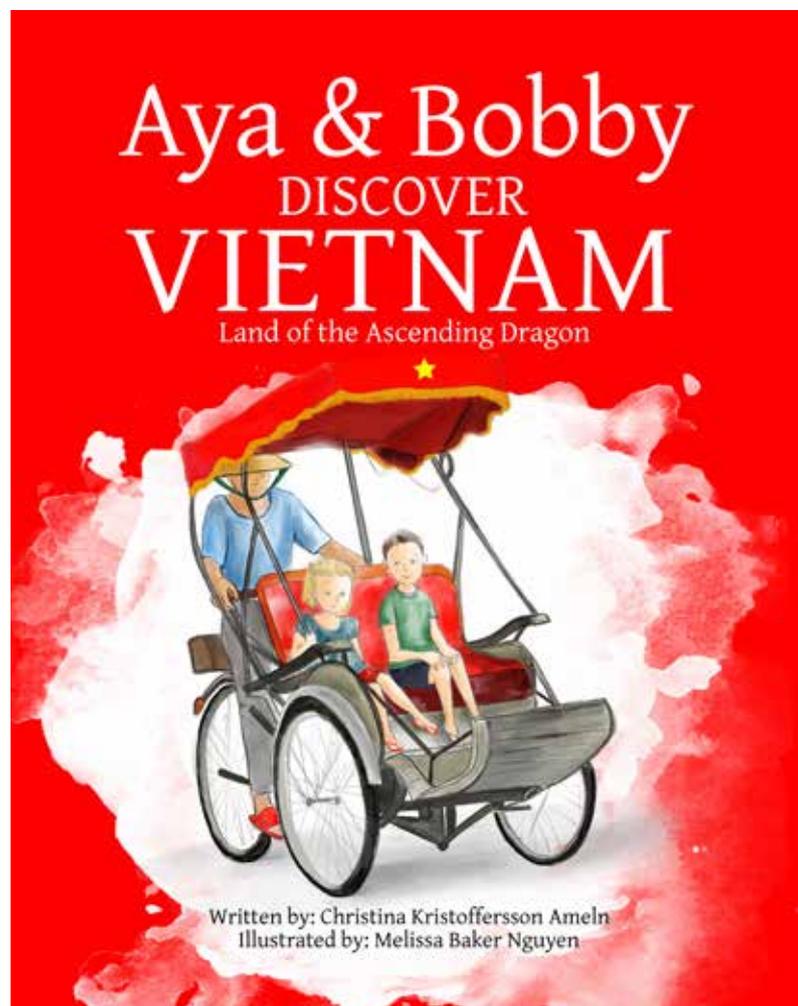
THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

ISHCMC launches Summer Camp 2018

International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) Secondary Campus launches ISHCMC Summer Camp 2018 with the goal of facilitating unique learning opportunities for students of all ages. Each week has a different theme with project-based learning experiences offered via sports, cooking, inquiry-based activities, life skills and team building activities.

The Summer Camp Program runs from June 18 to July 27, 2018 and consists of a two, three, four, five or six weeks program developed for 5 to 15 year olds. The tuition fee includes snacks, lunch and a summer camp t-shirt and cap. The ISHCMC Summer Camp is open to students from other schools in the city and will be hosted at the new ISHCMC state-of-the-art Secondary Campus facilities. Interested families should contact Steve Lanning, Camp Director by sending an email to Steve@inspireeducamps.org.



Aya & Bobby Discover Vietnam

Tapping into the growing segment of families traveling together and their wish to expose their children to new cultures and destinations, author and international Swede, Christina K. Ameln, expands her illustrated children's book series on travel and discovery 'Aya & Bobby Discover' to include Vietnam. While in Vietnam, characters Aya and Bobby visit sites both in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, experience new cultures, try new food but also do what kids do—eat ice cream and make new friends in colorful, recognizable and well-drawn settings.

Christina's book on Vietnam (*Aya & Bobby Discover Vietnam, Land of the Ascending Dragon*) was a wish to showcase the country in a fun and colorful way for the entire family. She has seen an increase in families coming to Vietnam whether to visit or to work. Inspired by her two children and her love of new cultures and destinations, Christina wanted to create books with adventures that combined fun, facts and what you do while on the road.

More info can be found on www.AyaandBobby.com.

Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh

Home Away From Home

“Home sweet home” –
a sentiment that touches
the heart

Text and Images Provided by **Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh**

FOR THE ELDERS, “HOME” IS A sense of nostalgia, precious memories that they can’t be forgotten. For the young, “home” is shelter to from the tiredness of the crowded city and leaving the tiredness behind.

The “Coming Home” theme this summer at Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh is an ideal getaway for the whole family. The resort is located on the edge of the Van Long Nature Reserve—a tranquil reserve comprise of wetlands that are popular with bird-watchers—in Ninh Binh province, an approximately 90-minute drive from Hanoi. Built with traditional Vietnamese architecture and elements, and married with cutting edge technology with guests’ comfort in mind, Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh incorporates an environmental commitment that is evident throughout the resort.

The resort boasts a total of 172 rooms divided into 9 clusters named after Tonkin Villages name like Jackfruit, Mango, Areca and more. Each room is warmly decorated in Tonkin housing style with brown-red brick flooring and clay walls—offering a true sense of Vietnam—complemented by a spacious bathroom with garden views and an outdoor shower. A natural private terrace allows guests to relax in a comfortable lounge chair and enjoy a cup of tea while reading.

During the afternoon, guests can cycle around the resort or leisurely walk around the resort’s manicured landscape for some fresh air and then



stop by at Organic Restaurant for a delicious family dinner. Family dinner is a time for bonding, where grandparents reminiscence about their upbringing in the countryside, parents recall their childhood antics, and children listening to these stories while enjoying yummy desserts. With a full day of sun and fun with the family behind, slide into a nice comfy bed for a good night’s sleep.

Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh not only boosts a nature wonderland for kids to discover but the resort also has two swimming pools. Dads can get a good workout at the gym while moms can get pampered and rejuvenated at La Cochinchine Luxury Spa. Your stay at Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh is like your home because home is where the heart is. ■

Emeralda Resort Ninh Binh: Van Long Reserve, Gia Van Commune, Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh, Vietnam. Tel: (+84) 303 658 333. Email: info@emeraldaresort.com. Website: www.emeraldaresort.com

TROI OI!

The country in numbers



1.8 MILLION **ETHNIC MINORITY MEMBERS IN VIETNAM HAVE** risen from poverty over the past six years, between 2010 and 2016, according to an official report from the World Bank. The report, however, underlined that this success is only a small step in a much larger process. The announcement was issued at the dissemination workshop for the report “Climbing the Ladder, Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in Vietnam” in last month. Between 2014 and 2016 the poverty elimination rate hit 1.85 percent, exceeding the expectations set forth by Vietnam’s National Target Program. The overall poverty rate in Vietnam dropped more than 3.5 percent, to a standpoint of nearly 10 percent, in the same period. Those numbers can be broken down to a five percent decrease in rural areas and a 2.2 percent fall in urban locales. Northern mountainous and Central Highlands regions are the primary areas of concern for groups looking to ease those numbers. According to the UN, any individual whose earnings are less than USD2 a day is considered poor. Vietnam has a total of 54 ethnic groups, 53 of which are considered minorities.

19-MONTH-OLD **CHILD WAS HOSPITALIZED WITH NEARLY** 1,000 bee stings. It took doctors over an hour to pull all the stingers from the boy’s body and head. He arrived at the hospital in time to avoid the fatal consequences of the bee venom, said Ta Thi Quynh Anh, a nurse at the infirmary. The boy recovered following three days of treatment. Sang’s 10-year-old sister had been asked to mind him while the rest of the family was at work. Shortly after, the unattended boy found himself in the back garden with two beehives while his sister was distracted by the television. Neighbors rushed to the scene after hearing his cries.



USD660 MILLION **CRYPTOCURRENCY FRAUD UNDER** investigation in Ho Chi Minh City. More than 32,000 people claim to be victims of a cryptocurrency pyramid scheme. Le Thanh Liem, deputy chairman of the municipal administration, asserted in his directive that cryptocurrency is an illegal non-cash payment method in Vietnam and the use of virtual money as a means of payment is prohibited. The directive was given less than a week after dozens of people gathered at the headquarters of Modern Tech JSC in District 1 on April 8 to publicly accuse the company of fraud. They claimed Modern Tech duped people into joining the ICO (Initial Coin Offering) for two cryptocurrencies, Ifan and Pincoin, in Vietnam. In its Vietnam ICO, Modern Tech encouraged people to invest in Ifan, promising them a huge monthly interest rate of at least 48 percent, in cash. One must buy at least USD1,000 worth of Ifan to become an investor. Over 32,000 investors wound up contributing a total of VND15 trillion to Modern Tech, only to see the company abruptly switch from making interest payments in Ifan rather than cash, as promised. According to experts, the Ifan ICO is in fact a pyramid scheme, where older investors are paid using revenue generated by new investors.

115 EMERGENCY AID CENTERS AND 24 SATELLITE STATIONS throughout the city are experiencing a shortage of personnel and ambulances, which has seriously affected the quality in service. Dr. Giang, chairman of the city's Public Health Association, said that only 1 percent of patients were transported by ambulance to hospitals while the rest were transported by taxi or brought to hospitals by their relatives. There has been an increase in calls in the last three years, from 8,787 in 2015 to 20,827 in 2017. The number of patients receiving emergency aid rose from 5,172 in 2015 to 12,176 in 2017. Most cases that need emergency aid are victims of traffic accidents involving drunk driving.



~10,000 FLIGHTS WERE DELAYED OR CANCELLED, ACCOUNTING for 13.5 percent, in the first quarter of this year. Vietnam Airlines and budget VietjetAir recorded fewer delayed and cancelled flights, down 1.4 percent and 3.9 percent year-on-year, respectively. Meanwhile, Jetstar Pacific and Vasco saw increases in delayed and cancelled flights. The CAAV attributed flight unpunctuality to late arrival of planes and subjective reasons from airlines, as well as weather conditions and flight management.



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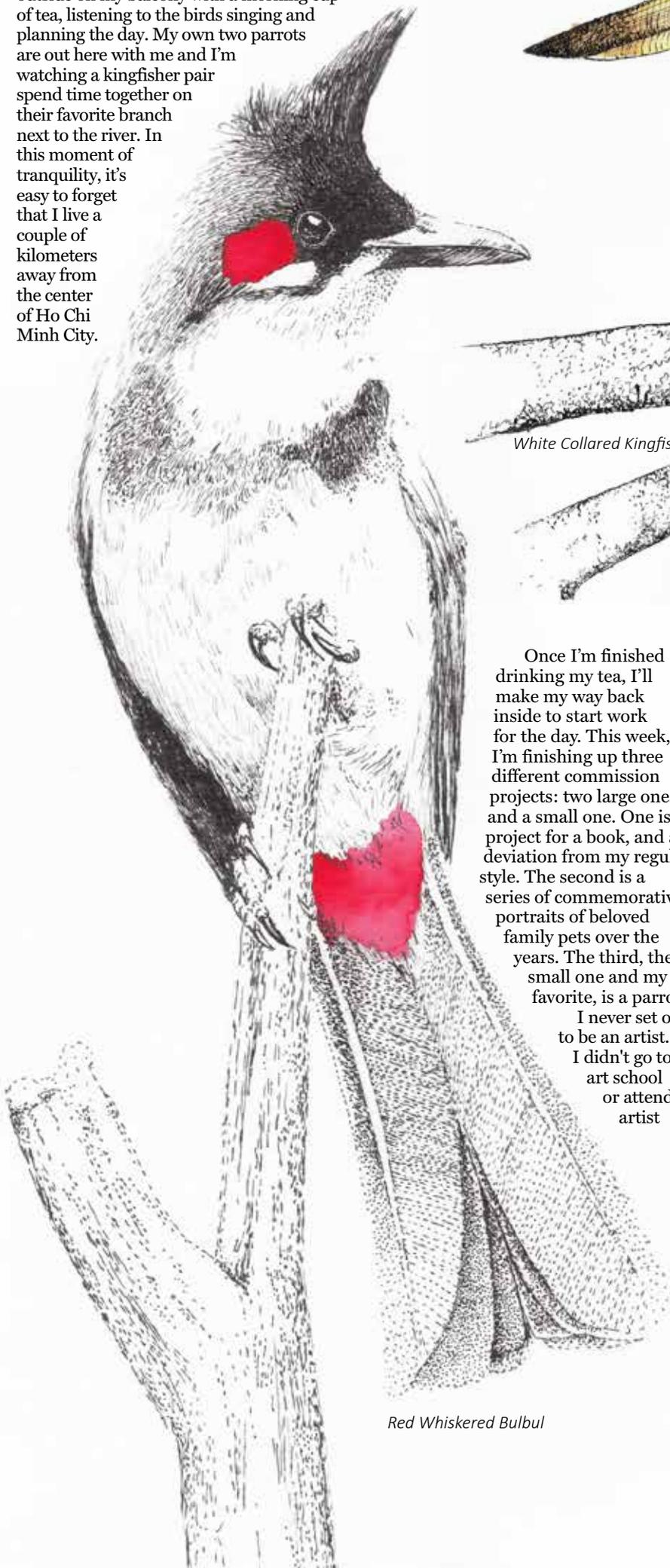
My Life
As A
Bird Artist

Capturing the inherent
beauty of birds through
ink and paper

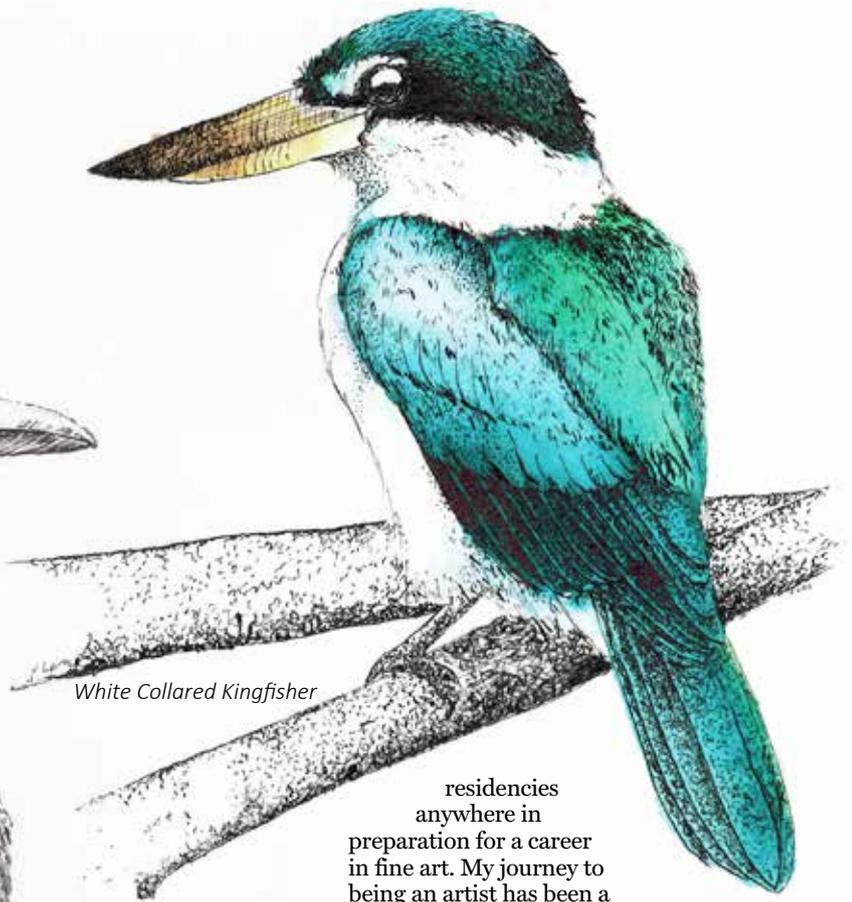
Text and Artwork by **KC Gillies**



AS I WRITE THIS, I'M SITTING outside on my balcony with a morning cup of tea, listening to the birds singing and planning the day. My own two parrots are out here with me and I'm watching a kingfisher pair spend time together on their favorite branch next to the river. In this moment of tranquility, it's easy to forget that I live a couple of kilometers away from the center of Ho Chi Minh City.



Red Whiskered Bulbul



White Collared Kingfisher

Once I'm finished drinking my tea, I'll make my way back inside to start work for the day. This week, I'm finishing up three different commission projects: two large ones and a small one. One is a project for a book, and a deviation from my regular style. The second is a series of commemorative portraits of beloved family pets over the years. The third, the small one and my favorite, is a parrot.

I never set out to be an artist. I didn't go to art school or attend artist

residencies anywhere in preparation for a career in fine art. My journey to being an artist has been a slow, quiet one. Drawing began as a hobby, a creative outlet in my free time. I was shy about what I created but, with a desire for feedback and direction, I posted my artwork on an anonymous Instagram account and with time I built an audience, and began to discover a style. Eventually messages about commissions and purchasing my artwork started coming in, and the thought was born that I just might be able to do this for a living.

I draw what inspires me, and lately this has been almost exclusively birds. What began as the desire to overcome a challenging subject became a fascination, an obsession even, with feathers and beaks and the insane amount of character birds possess. Living in Vietnam has only furthered this obsession. What surprised me the first time I walked around downtown Ho Chi Minh City wasn't the traffic or the chaos on the sidewalks or even the muggy heat—those things I had been expecting—it was the sound of songbirds rising above all the traffic noise while millions of people going about their lives. I have seen song sparrows everywhere I've lived, but with renewed excitement I rushed home to sketch them. And since that day, the abundance of birds in this bustling city (both pet and wild) has helped keep me grounded. I daresay the multitude of people in Vietnam who keep birds as pets feel the same way.

If you've spent anytime watching birds, you'll see immediately why they make poor live models—they never stay in one place for longer than a few seconds. While drawing from life is my preference, I almost always draw from reference photos and bird books. I study birds I see in parrot cafés, pet shops, kept



Macaw



Spotted Owl

outside storefronts and flying outside my window to better understand the way they move, the way they sound, feel and the noises they make. Then I use reference photos to help with posing and proportions when I plan out my pieces. Behind every drawing is an awareness of the life in each animal, and the desire to keep and convey as much of that life as possible. This obsession with birds is the result of a desire to completely understand my subject.

Life as a pen and ink artist has unique challenges. The art community as a whole carries the belief that paintings on canvas are inherently more valuable than works on paper, regardless of the time and skill involved in either. My style of using thousands of tiny dots and lines is very time consuming, and it's difficult to create work fast enough to sell it at an affordable rate and keep up with commission deadlines. Living in Vietnam also presents its own brand of challenges, primarily limited opportunities for gallery showings and unreliable (and expensive) international shipping. However, the lower cost of living here also means more financial freedom to pursue a potentially unreliable career. The money I bring in with my art goes further, with less pressure to make sales and commissions. At some point during the day today

I will put my pen down and stop to think about how grateful I am to call this my work. It's difficult work, mind you; navigating the world of marketing and self-promotion can be exhausting, and the lack of reliability stressful. But the sense of satisfaction from paying bills with money earned as an artist far outweighs any of this. ■



KC Gillies

For more of KC Gillies' artwork, visit [instagram.com/kegilliesillustration](https://www.instagram.com/kegilliesillustration) or kegillies.com



Paw Pixels

Interview by **Christine Van**
Pet Images by **Thomas Ritchie**
Images of Thomas by **Vy Lam**

Time to get Fido and Whiskers ready for their close-ups

Dougal



with clients.

It was a combination of seeing the personality of all the different pets we had in our family growing up and then discovering the work of William Wegman and his Weimeraners. The man is a creative genius and was one of the first photographers to use his dogs in poses that most of us associate with people. His work opened a door in my imagination and I was keen to walk through it. I didn't at that time realize how much training would have to go into getting a dog to do what you want in the studio, but that's been part of the fun.

What inspires your passion?

I've loved cameras and photography since I was a child and this, combined with my love of animals, makes it a dream job. What drives me is seeing the happiness and satisfaction on a client's face when you have captured the personality of their pet in an image that they can share and enjoy.

Images from Wegman started me off and more recently Seth Casteel and his dog action shots. Also, Jesse Freidin and the shots of dogs wearing outfits like those worn by Lady Gaga help to drive fresh ideas and show that anything is possible.

Tell us about your first client?

It was my friend Andrea, from Falkirk in Scotland, and her Hermann's tortoise Harvey. You'd think that a tortoise would be easy to shoot but it involved a few challenges because Harvey is cold-blooded and Scotland is not the warmest place on earth. We tried a few things with him out of his vivarium, but he wasn't keen on staying in one place, and tortoises can move faster than you'd expect so we had to re-think the plan. Determined to get the shot, I put Harvey back into the vivarium and then found myself lying on the floor with the top half of my body squashed in the vivarium while Andrea was moving Harvey to one

FLUFFY CATS WITH POUTY

expressions and pugs posed with their paws in the air are pretty much the stuff that makes any human being smile. If your Instagram feed is mostly celebrity pets, Lil Bub and your own cuddly, four-legged friend, then you're going to want to read about Thomas Ritchie's (www.thomasritchiephotography.co.uk) dream career as a pet photographer.

Where did you study photography and why pet photography?

I studied photography at the award-winning Edinburgh College Photography department. My portfolio was submitted and awarded a Licentiate'ship from the BIPP (British Institute of Professional Photography). The BIPP accreditation is only given if your work is of a suitable professional level and means I have to abide by their code of conduct for my work, which ensures a high standard in the work I output and in my dealings



end and I had sugar snap peas below the camera lens to encourage him to walk towards me and it worked. I'm convinced the food was the key in getting the shot as it stopped him just basking in his vivarium under his sun lamp.

What is the biggest challenge working with dogs?

Keeping them still and focused on me long enough to get the shot can be difficult, especially if they are very young and puppy brain is still in charge. It's like shooting children, they have a short attention span and are extremely curious so you have to be prepared for it and be patient. It really helps if the owners have walked them and run off some of their energy before we shoot.

How do you get the animals to stay and pose for you?

With dogs it's actually quite easy, I always ask their owners to have their favorite toy or treat with them at the shoot, or I take some liver cake that I make for my dog Dougal. Most dogs will do anything you want them to for it, it's like magic. I usually either hold the treat on top of the camera and let the dog know it's there or have the owner stand behind me with it and then the dog will look down the lens for me. With other animals it's not always so easy and you have to be even more relaxed. There's no way to get a cat or a lot of other pets to do what you want so you have to be really patient and ready to click the shutter quickly to capture the moment. The key is definitely to make sure the animal is comfortable and happy. If this involves me crawling or lying on the ground, climbing ladders and having squashed treats in all my pockets then it's worth it.

How is pet photography different from any other type of photography?

It's much more unpredictable than shooting a person, people are generally more compliant and can follow directions, but the fact that anything can and usually does happen with animals is half the fun. There's always usually a lot of laughter with the owners and myself at the animal's antics. Those are the only main differences as the prep and postproduction are similar to a fashion shoot in many ways.

Tell us about your most memorable or rewarding pet photography session.

I found this so difficult to narrow down because there have been so many, from Mika the pug in her different outfits for a calendar, Harvey the tortoise being shot on a skateboard for a broadband advert to the first time I took Max, my parents' border collie, into the studio. I guess it has to be that first shoot with Max because it was the springboard from which the idea really took off for me.

How do you keep the animals safe and comfortable during a shoot?

The owner has to be there, I wouldn't



Mika

shoot anyone's pet without them being there to make their baby feel safe, and the time of the shoot has to be limited to around 30-40 minutes to ensure that they don't get too bored and tired. This is especially important here in Vietnam, both in the studio and outside because of the heat. The flash can also be frightening to some dogs and sometimes we need to spend a little time getting the animal used to it and if they don't like it then we abandon it and try to use natural light where possible. Within 90 minutes I can arrive, set-up the kit, shoot the animal and be gone, with the pet being involved for less than half the total time. Their welfare has to be paramount in any shoot.

Who's harder to work with - the animals or their owners?

Now, how honest to be here! This question did make me laugh a little because some owners have ideas that aren't possible with their pet. The owners can be a little harder to work with than the animals and that's understandable as I'm shooting their baby. They can also sometimes get a little excited which then excites the pet and makes them less cooperative. I guess the other thing is that the animals can't talk!

Tell us about your dog Dougal. You've got some gorgeous photos of him, is he a diva in front of the camera?

Dougal is pretty good in the studio because I've been very consistent with his daily obedience training and he just wants to make me happy. He has such a wonderfully friendly and happy personality, and we have such a strong bond that he'll let me do almost anything to him. I got the picture of him in his hat in around 10 minutes; it took about 35 shots as he kept knocking the hat off, but that was the game and through play we got the photo. It wasn't even planned, I was in the studio setting up new lights I recently bought and he wandered in so I thought let's test the lights and you can see the result.

I'm currently planning to shoot a

cowboy theme with Dougal—with cow skin rug, cowboy hat, checkered shirt and a Sherriff's badge—to play on his breed as a border collie, being responsible for herding cattle and keeping them safe. Finding the correct props and getting the clothes to fit is sometimes a challenge and it would be great to find someone who could make outfits for him because I have so many ideas of things I can do with him. The poor wee boy doesn't know what he's in for but he'll be well rewarded.

And finally, what advice would you give our readers trying to get the best shots of their pets?

Firstly, I'd say get me to do it! Run off some of your dog's energy before shooting as they will be more relaxed and willing to work with you. Be patient and enjoy it, if you get stressed then so does your pet, so try to make it as enjoyable as possible while remaining calm. Use food, bribe them to do what you want and reward them often. Most importantly, use your knowledge of your pet and what they do and don't like to make it fun. ■



Cleo



Enjoy

The Show

Behind the scenes with members of Dragonfly Theatre, Saigon's professional English-language theatre troupe

Text by **Jonathan Ma**
Images Provided by **Dragonfly Theatre**

“WE’RE HERE BECAUSE WE LOVE what we do. Everyone’s in it because they love it,” says David Delves, whose passion for the theatre is undeniable. Originally from London, where he went to school for the performing arts, David is currently one of the board members of Dragonfly Theatre Company. Dragonfly Theatre was founded in 2010 by theatre-loving expats Jaime Zúñiga and Aaron Toronto. Jaime is originally from Nicaragua, while Aaron is an American filmmaker. Their goal was to put on professional quality English plays for audiences throughout Ho Chi Minh City. Their first production was *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Trivial Comedy for Serious People* by Oscar Wilde. It was a breakthrough in the English-language theatre scene—a professional play in Vietnam with paid actors—and a major success, bringing with it the exciting prospect of ongoing English-language plays in Ho Chi Minh City.

There are a handful of English-language theatre troupes in the city, one of which is Saigon Players. They are a non-profit community theatre group that regularly organizes shows and serve an important role in developing the skills and confidence of the theatre community. Saigon Players also introduces new audiences to theatre as an art and a pastime. However, as a community theatre group, they are limited by their selection of who to select as cast and crew and this is where Dragonfly comes in. They have the opportunity to bring the next level of theatre productions to Ho Chi Minh City.

Sitting in a cozy café with a few of the other board members is Belinda Smith. She’s been associated with Dragonfly since its inception eight years ago. “Dragonfly Theatre was born out of not just wanting to do amateur dramatics. We wanted to raise the level of quality of the shows being put on here,” says Belinda.



Lend Me a Tenor

“We hold auditions for all of the shows,” David says. For every upcoming show, Dragonfly sets up public casting calls and auditions to find talented actors for each role. In addition, each of the board members themselves performs roles, such as acting, directing and producing. The casting calls are usually posted on their Facebook page.

The Journey

While the shows are in English, theatre-goers need not be fluent in the language to enjoy themselves. Dragonfly has tried displaying Vietnamese subtitles during a production, but it didn’t work out so well. Producer Son explains, “We tried subtitles once. It just doesn’t work. The audience has to look away from the actor. It’s live theatre we’re talking about.” Trying to read subtitles on a screen does indeed ruin the “live” part of the show. It is impossible to watch the intricacies of each scene and the actors’ subtle cues while at the same time try to read the subtitles on a screen offstage.

The members of Dragonfly believe that watching theatre isn’t just about knowing English; body language, props and interactions between actors onstage can fill in the gaps. To them, theatre is an art that is underappreciated and underrepresented here. To that end, they hope that more Vietnamese will come to the shows.

Dragonfly puts on two to three shows a year. How do they decide what show to put on? Board members will get together and brainstorm ideas soon after every production. Usually they will put on shows that have already proven to be popular overseas. Belinda explains, “Because the theatre scene is still young here, it’s easier to get an audience to a well-known play.”

The result of their hard work and dedication is an entertaining experience that is hard to forget. Past productions have included: *The Importance of Being*

Earnest, The Last 5 Years, Lovesong and *Dangerous Liaisons*. Belinda reveals why performing is so rewarding, “It’s the connection that you get to an audience while performing. The journey that you and the audience go on together.”

In recent years, there has been a surge of development in Vietnam, with the focus mostly on the economic and academic sectors. Dragonfly Theatre is actively trying to change that, they want the younger generation also embrace, enjoy and participate in the arts. And as a result, they have been organizing theatre classes and workshops to teach children, some as young as five, singing, dancing and acting skills. The classes are hosted at different schools and academies across the city.

Dragonfly Theatre’s next upcoming performance is tentatively scheduled for September of this year. The play is called *Mr. Stink* and is based on a book written by David Walliams that was adapted for the theatre by Maryam Master. This performance will be a great introduction to theatre, especially for young audiences because it will feature teenaged actors. ■

Stay connected with Dragonfly Theatre through their website and Facebook pages: facebook.com/dragonflyvietnam and dragonflytheatrevietnam.weebly.com.



Lovesong



Lawrence and Holloman

Because they have the resources to hire paid actors, Dragonfly is able to work with trained professional actors in putting on captivating and sensational shows.

Dragonfly’s shows are held all over the city. “We started in Vietnamese theatres. Later, we held shows at Cargo Bar, Saigon Outcast and Soul Live Project. Our next show will be at an international school. Finding a venue for each show is very difficult and we also have to obtain licenses in order to put on each play,” she explains. The process is an arduous and time-consuming one because the cast and crew don’t have a central location so it requires a lot of flexibility on the part of everyone. Until now, Dragonfly still has not found a suitable location to hold rehearsals and productions, but this hasn’t stopped the highly motivated and passionate team to continue trekking on and overcoming any obstacles to doing what they love most—performing for audiences to enjoy.



George’s Marvellous Medicine

Past Reflections, Future Considerations

After the success of the exhibition *Waging Peace – U.S. Soldiers and Veterans Who Opposed America’s War in Vietnam*, which opened in March at the War Remnants Museum storied diplomat, Madam Ton Nu Thi Ninh, the current president of the Ho Chi Minh City Peace & Development Foundation (HPDF), sat down with *Oi* to discuss facets of her career, her work at HPDF, as well as her thoughts on the future

Text by **Daniel Spero**
Image by **Vy Lam**

ORIGINALLY FROM HUE, BY THE early 1970s Madam Ninh was a young academic studying in Paris. It was here where she became politically engaged. “I was taking part in the anti-war movement among the Vietnamese in Paris, and so I was recruited to go back to Saigon to do work for the NLF (the National Liberation Front).”

Upon her return to Vietnam she took a position at Saigon Teachers College as Deputy Dean of the faculty of English, while continuing her work for the NLF. “The NLF had recruited a number of us from Paris. The cause was to help get the US out and regain the southern part of our country. This is something that I have to insist on, something that irks me the most, the notion that one part

of the country was invading the other part. Imagine people saying that the Yankees were invading the Confederate USA during the Civil War. It’s the same country, just with different political ideas, but it’s still one country. That’s the way we felt.”

As we know from history, the NLF movement prevailed and the US withdrew from Vietnam. While the war was over, however, deep wounds remained in the decades that followed. When an opportunity came in 2004 to attempt to bridge the divide on a diplomatic tour of the US, Madam Ninh expressed disappointment that she wasn’t able to do more, yet felt that the diaspora had been unwilling to listen.

“I have always been open to talk,



to engage. In fact when I was in the National Assembly I did a tour of the US. By the time I was in Chicago the diehards that had heard about my tour started organizing a bit of protest, and I understood it was a relic of the past. The end of my trip was in San Diego. In San Diego the most diehards had two busloads of protesters come from Orange County to protest," she recalls.

She described how, after demanding the right to attend, they rushed into the room where she was scheduled to speak, occupying more than two-thirds of the seats. "They let me do the introduction and then the moment the Q&A started there were hands flashing out, with mostly accusatory, denouncing (language), nothing about the dialogue, just calling me a liar and that sort of thing. Internally I thought, 'My, if someone like me, coming in that spirit of openness, they cannot even talk, just talk, then what I realized is that, that was the glass wall I had hit.' It was as far as I could go in trying to illicit dialogue. They didn't come for dialogue. It was an opportunity to showcase, so they had brought their TV crew so they could broadcast back home in Orange County."

Rather than speak with her, they stood in the front of the room and delivered statements for the cameras. "Well, I was a bit disappointed. With the spirit in which I had come I was a bit disappointed that we couldn't really talk and that I had reached the limit of what I could do."

Asked if she could empathize with the members of the Overseas Vietnamese community who refused to return to Vietnam, Madam Ninh replies, "You need to go and visit the country and the people. You go there to visit the people, the country, family if you have them, but it doesn't mean you support the government."

Due to these contretemps about the past, when looking to the next generation of Vietnamese, Madam Ninh sees the need for more political understanding and involvement. "Among the young in Vietnam what troubles me is that some of them are so blindly pro-American. Some of it you could see during President Obama's visit. He's a very attractive kind of president. They were connecting to him. It's alright to be curious about the US, it's alright to, in fact, admire the major achievements of the US, especially in technology, science, and in talent development, but they know so little about the US, about US history and society, yet they're a bit starry-eyed, and at the same time they don't integrate the past into whatever perceptions and judgments they make about the rest of the world, including the US. They shrug their shoulders when some people try to explain to them what the war was about. It was a terrible price to pay, but the fundamental thing that we need to explain to our young people is that of course we would have preferred that there be no war."

Peace

Madam Ninh adds, "I'm often in contact with young people, so I try to help them make sense. Of course you should not let the past weigh on you to the point that you can't move ahead, that you don't know how to appreciate other people or other cultures. On the other hand you cannot just shrug it off, it's got nothing to do with us, that's our parents or grandparents; we are free and now just move on. So I try to help them understand that any individual cannot have a future if he doesn't own a past. The question is, how does he own it and relate to it? Even if the past was dark there is a positive way of making it work for a brighter future. The right way is not to say it didn't happen, or I don't care. History doesn't begin with your own life."

While discussing how an engaged and informed youth can impact the country, Madam Ninh referenced the recent social movement by students in the US following the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where 17 people were killed in February. "I'm pleasantly surprised because people were saying, never will there be talk about repealing the Second Amendment, that's something completely unrealistic, but there's now even a former Supreme Court justice who said it's time to repeal the Second Amendment."

She's referring to a *New York Times* op-ed piece from March 26th where former US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote: "In 2008, the Supreme Court overturned Chief Justice Burger's and others' long-settled understanding of the Second Amendment's limited reach by ruling, in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, that there was an individual right to bear arms. I was among the four dissenters. That decision—which I remain convinced was wrong and certainly was debatable—has provided the N.R.A. with a propaganda weapon of immense power. Overturning that decision via a constitutional amendment to get rid of the Second Amendment would be simple and would do more to weaken the N.R.A.'s ability to stymie legislative debate and block constructive gun control legislation than any other available option."

Ninh then pointed to the success of policy changes in Australia, but acknowledged that it would be difficult to accomplish in the US because, "When you speak about US exceptionalism, one part of the exceptionalism is this thing about gun ownership."

This dialog in regard to guns and gun violence led to discussion of one of the programs Madam Ninh is currently developing at HPDF, called the Peace Culture Program, aimed at breeding tolerance and peaceful values in everyday life. "Because you see, there has been a rise in violence in civil society among the young, and so it means that some lifestyles have come down in terms of

quality and morality."

"Our program is to say peace is not just the silencing of guns or the stopping of bloodshed, because violence is not just the shedding of blood. There are all forms of violence and it takes place nearly everywhere, under all sorts of forms, and if we want a humane and civilized, cultured life, we've got to tackle it. That's why in this program I want to organize workshops, but I also want to do a mass awareness program, because this city [HCMC] is known as an economic hub and I would like people to remember that it's not all about money. We need to strive toward something that is more, that goes deeper, that brings perhaps, more lasting happiness than just material wellbeing."

Her hope is to create an annual festival in HCMC on September 21st, the International Day of Peace. And her message to the youth for creating a peaceful future is that: "Each of them needs to develop their own philosophy of life. And in that philosophy of life there should be certain values that should be central, that should be guiding them as they grow up and get on with their lives. For example, compassion and respect for others, tolerance, respect for diversity, and also openness to the rest of the world. But you have to be sound in yourself as you go out into the world. If you're a vulnerable person, if you don't really have clear values, then you won't know what to make of the broader world, and this broad world, today, you can see is such a mess."

So, are the Vietnamese youths doing that? "I think the Vietnamese, compared to a few other nations in East Asia, I think we are a very moderate nation. We avoid the extremes of the pendulum. Now, our young people, some are hyper-nationalist. For example, now they hate everything Chinese. I explain to them, I say, during the war we never boycotted French culture, French bread, French wine. During the war resisting the American army, we never boycotted Coca-Cola or jeans or whatever, so we are not going to start now. We don't like what the Chinese government does in the East Sea, that doesn't mean that any Chinese product we should boycott, or the people. It may be difficult to speak to certain Chinese today, but we still need to talk to them. There's no other way. So that's one extreme that we need to avoid among the young."

Madam Ninh continues taking lessons from conflicts of the past to teach the youth more about social responsibility through the programs she's spearheaded at HPDF, such as The Orange Initiative to assist those disabled by dioxin, or the aforementioned Peace Culture Program to spread non-violence practices. ■

To learn more about her work in national development and youth empowerment, as well as the programs and activities of HPDF, visit hpdf.vn.



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More Than *Skin Deep*

The medical tourism industry is booming and Vietnam is tapping into the market

Images Provided by **Worldwide Beauty and Dental Hospital**

VIETNAM'S GOT SANDY BEACHES, ancient history and topnotch restaurants, but that's not why tourists are flocking here: they're coming for the health care. Medical tourism is a booming industry thanks to affordable prices, cutting-edge equipment and infrastructure that encourages visitors in need of a check-up.

Oi speaks to Dr. Do Dinh Hung, the founder of Worldwide Beauty and Dental Hospital (previously Dr. Hung & Associates Dental Center), about its recent expansion, popular cosmetic surgeries and trends

Worldwide has grown from a clinic to a licensed hospital, describe the licensing process and what the differences are between a "clinic" and a "hospital"?

To be a hospital there were many complex levels of compliances we had to fulfill and pass along with installing more equipment, testing facilities,



What can a new dental patient expect during the initial consultation visit at Worldwide?

We always begin by asking the patient to fill out a questionnaire then we perform a 3D x-ray of the mouth. Next is a thorough examination of their teeth and a discussion with the patient regarding their dental concerns and desired outcome. While putting together a dental plan, we will give them a tour of the facilities where the operation will take place. The dental plan is then discussed, explaining to the patient with the x-ray why we proposed the plan along with options to accommodate different cost constraints.

How do you keep up with the latest technology and the surgical innovations?

Our team continuously attends conferences locally and overseas. We visit trade shows to understand and acquire the latest technologies to bring to our hospital. We also have associations with overseas businesses where they visit the hospital annually to train and retrain our staff. We recently signed with a notable Korean surgeon to further improve our skills.

What are some of the different requests and needs between Western and Vietnamese clients?

Actually, we don't see many huge differences. Money is mainly the factor that prohibits people from getting procedures done.

Worldwide also offers five-star hospitality services, what services can

clients expect before and after their treatments?

We will pick up and drop off our clients to and from the airport. We're also affiliated with several hotels in the city where we can arrange accommodations for them upon request. There is also postoperative support for clients who are traveling alone—they can stay at the hospital or have a staff member stay with them at their hotel. We can tailor services to each of our patient's specific needs.

Are there any particular trends that you see taking place within the next few years in cosmetic surgery?

In dentistry, Vietnamese people are now more aware of the importance of good dental hygiene and we will see more check-ups to combat teeth decay. Cosmetic surgery will continue to trend upwards as a new level of middle class emerges.

What are Worldwide's future plans in Vietnam? A possible expansion in other cities?

No, will not open in other cities because we want to continually develop and focus on Worldwide Beauty and Dental Hospital here in Ho Chi Minh City. However, our approach is to have cooperative agreements with medical experts to use our hospital in order to give the best care to the patient. ■

For more info on Worldwide Beauty and Dental Hospital, visit www.worldwidebeautyhospital.com.

medical staff and training to meet Vietnam's vigorous requirements. We're very pleased to be licensed as a hospital.

Vietnam is becoming a popular destination for medical tourism, how has Worldwide tapped into this market? How do you stand out from the competition?

By investing in the very best equipment and staff training, giving a concise plan to each patient, quickly executed with customer focus at all times has led us to become Number 1 in dental work in Vietnam and the same approach is being used for our cosmetic procedures.

What are some of the popular medical tourism treatments Worldwide performs?

Dentistry implants and crowns are our most popular requests because our clients want to get their smile back. Nose and eye surgeries and breast enlargements are also popular.



Drive Safely



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.

Hi Antoine, I'm a student from the EU traveling in Southeast Asia. I am going to spend a few months in Vietnam and will be driving a motorbike throughout my trip. Do you have any advice in case I have a road accident?

MOTORBIKE TRIPS IN VIETNAM are always an amazing experience. Don't forget to go to Ha Giang in the north: It's one of the most beautiful regions I visited in Vietnam.

You are right to be cautious. Road accidents are common in Vietnam. Most foreigners do not know what to do when they discover themselves involved in one. The road network, lagging behind economic and demographic growth, has difficulty accommodating the 40 million scooters, including more than 7 million in Ho Chi Minh City. Despite substantial improvements year after year, heavy traffic congestion causes many accidents.

Road accident is even reported to be the leading cause of death among 15-29 year-olds in Vietnam. In 2013, Vietnam was ranked the 45th most dangerous nation in terms of road safety, with a death rate of 23.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, or 55 per 100,000 vehicles. France, in comparison, had a rate of 5.65 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in the same year and was ranked 153rd in the world.

In this context, it is always good to be reminded the basic rules that should be followed to have a safe motorbike trip.

First tip, which might seem obvious but better to be said than not is: Get proper medical insurance coverage. Vietnam's health facilities leave a lot to be desired. Only some international private clinics may provide health care close to EU standards, but they are

expensive. A proper medical coverage will allow you to have access to those clinics and, in case it is needed, to be transferred to another country or back to your home country.

There are also some local legal requirements that you should know and comply with in order to be safe. You have to choose a reliable helmet. Helmets are compulsory in Vietnam since 2007, according to the law on road traffic, and that has saved many lives because the police controls are strict. Be careful when selecting one because it does not always correspond to European or US standards: You can rely on the ECE 22/04 and ECE 22/05 labels (European norms) or DOT label (US norm) if you want to ensure the helmet is high quality. Such helmets should have an ECE or DOT sticker.

Furthermore, there can be no more than two on a scooter. Finally, you need a driving licence if you want to drive a scooter over 50cc. Since October 15th, 2014, an international licence is accepted if your country of origin has been part of the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic. If not, you may convert your national licence to a Vietnamese one at these addresses: Traffic Department (252 Ly Chinh Thang, D3 for Ho Chi Minh City) or Road Directorate (106 Thai Think, for Hanoi).

Now, let's have a quick look at local traffic rules. Even if traffic remains rather chaotic, the Vietnamese law on road traffic (last promulgated in 2008)

is well drafted and close to the rules in many other countries. In recent years, the government has made serious efforts to improve road safety and reduce the number of traffic violations. The general rules are simple: you drive on the right; drivers must give way to pedestrians crossing at the crosswalks provided for this purpose. At crossings and in the absence of signs, the right priority (priority to the right) is applied. On the other hand, in roundabouts, the priority on the left prevails. As you will see very soon once you get in the country, it is clear that drivers (mainly motorbikes) do not always respect these rules. If the stop at the red light is generally respected, it must be noted that orange lights are systematically considered as green lights. As for pedestrian crossings, they are simply ignored by drivers of any kind. Thus, it is necessary at least to respect banal safety measures such as no drunk driving, no driving on sidewalks, respect of red lights and speed limits, etc.

Even if you follow this advice, you might still be part of a road accident during your travel. Keep in mind that you are required to promptly inform the nearest police station, as well as your insurance company. Furthermore, you should realize that driving without a valid driver's license may be a reason for your insurance company not to cover any damage caused by the accident, if you were driving the motorbike (as opposed to you being a passenger).

I wish a nice (and safe) motorbike trip! ■



Dr. Data Putra Sembiring graduated from Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia. Before working as a veterinary surgeon at Animal Doctor International Vietnam, he worked with German Primate Center (Siberut Conservation Program) and a private animal clinic in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

V For Vaccination

Making sure your animals are vaccinated against common diseases is an important part of owning pets

VACCINATION, OR

immunization, is the administration of antigenic material (a vaccine) to stimulate an individual's immune system to develop adaptive immunity. The vaccination will only be able to make the antibody, which protects our pets, when give at the right time with the correct dosage.

Puppies and kittens are born with immature immune systems, which make them highly susceptible to contracting diseases. Fortunately, we know the first week a mother cat or dog produces colostrum, which contains antibodies that will help protect their offspring from infectious diseases until their immune systems are mature. These maternal antibodies are essential but they present some challenges.

Maternal antibodies start to decline by the time puppies or kittens are around six weeks old. This will continue to decrease until they are undetectable by around 16 weeks of age if the mother was vaccinated and have strong immunity. These antibodies may disappear much sooner if the mother was not vaccinated.

In order for kittens or puppies to be fully protected from an infection, they should start their first vaccination when they are eight weeks old, when the maternal antibodies is started to decline, and if the puppies or kittens are hand-reared, they should get their first vaccination earlier at six weeks old because the maternal antibodies may disappear sooner.

Basic Immunization Schedule

In general, for either cats or dogs, there are vaccinations we called primary, or core, vaccination and non-core vaccination (optional), or

not recommended vaccine. The core vaccines for dogs are those that offer protection against Canine Distemper Virus (CDV), Canine Adenovirus (CAV ; type 1 and 2), Canine parvovirus type 2 and its variants. Rabies, in many countries, is also part of the core vaccination to safeguard the population and also as a must vaccination for any pet wanting to travel to other countries.

Non-core vaccines are needed if a pet's lifestyle has changed and there is an increased chance of it getting infected, while not recommended vaccines are those for which there is little scientific justification (insufficient evidence base) for their use.

For cats, core vaccines are Feline Panleukopenia, Feline herpesvirus-type one, also known as Feline viral Rhinotracheitis and feline calicivirus.

Feline Leukemia Virus and FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) are considered non-core vaccines under the small animal veterinary association as the infection is dependent on the lifestyle of each individual cat. Cats that have an outdoor lifestyle or indoor-outdoor or cats who have an unknown history should be tested for the status of infection before starting the vaccination and the vaccination is only done if the result of the test is negative.

Puppy, Kitten And 6 Or 12 Months Booster Vaccination

The recommendation for the initial core vaccination at 6 to 8 weeks of age, then every 2 to 4 weeks until 16 weeks of age or older. The number of puppy primary core vaccinations will be determined by the age at which vaccination is started and the selected interval between vaccinations.

An integral part of the core

vaccination for puppies is the 'booster' vaccine that has traditionally been given either at 12 months of age or 12 months after the last of the primary series of puppy vaccines. The main aim of this vaccine is to ensure that a protective immune response develops in any dog that may have failed to respond to any of the vaccines in the primary core series, rather than necessarily 'boosting' the immune response.

Revaccination Adult Cats And Dogs

Revaccination is required annually for every adult dogs and cats and one thing we need to be aware of is that every country is different, some require revaccination every three years but here in Vietnam every single vaccine needs to repeated every year. For the rabies vaccination, it will depend on the vet's recommendation, some only require every three years, but we should follow the government's regulation that the rabies vaccine should be repeated every year.

Vaccination Program For Cats And Dogs In Shelter

When puppies and kittens entering a shelter the core vaccinations may be started as early as 4 to 6 weeks of age, and (where funding permits) revaccination should be every 2 weeks until the animal reaches 20 weeks of age if it remains in the shelter until that time. Recent US studies have shown that cats entering shelters may be seropositive for vaccine-preventable infectious disease agents. If unambiguous documentation of vaccination is provided for an adult animal at the time of admission to a shelter, there is no reason to revaccinate with canine core vaccines, but feline core vaccines, specifically FCV and FHV-1, may be of value in boosting immunity. ■



ON THE N'GO

N'go (buy at: ngo-shoes.com) is a social sneakers brand that highlights the craftsmanship of Vietnam's ethnic minorities while also supporting the construction of elementary schools in remote villages in Northern Vietnam. In 2017 N'go was created by childhood friends Kevin and Ronan—both wanted to set up a project combining ethical values, craftsmanship and solidarity.

Collaborating with the White Thai artisans under a cooperative, Kevin and Ronan aim to promote and preserve the group's handweaving tradition. Working under a cooperative enables the ethnic minority groups to stay informed in the decision-making and even set their own selling prices, which N'go do not negotiate under any circumstances. N'go is currently working with two craftspeople cooperatives in Hoa Binh and Nghe An provinces. N'go donates part of its profits to Sao Bien, an organization that build schools in the poorest regions of Vietnam. Each school welcomes at least 60 pupils, aged 6 to 11 years old.

Proudly sporting traditional colorful patterns, the back and side of every pair is made of unique hand-woven fabrics. N'go's innovative feature is a new "espadrille style" with the laces placed around the shoes' outsole.







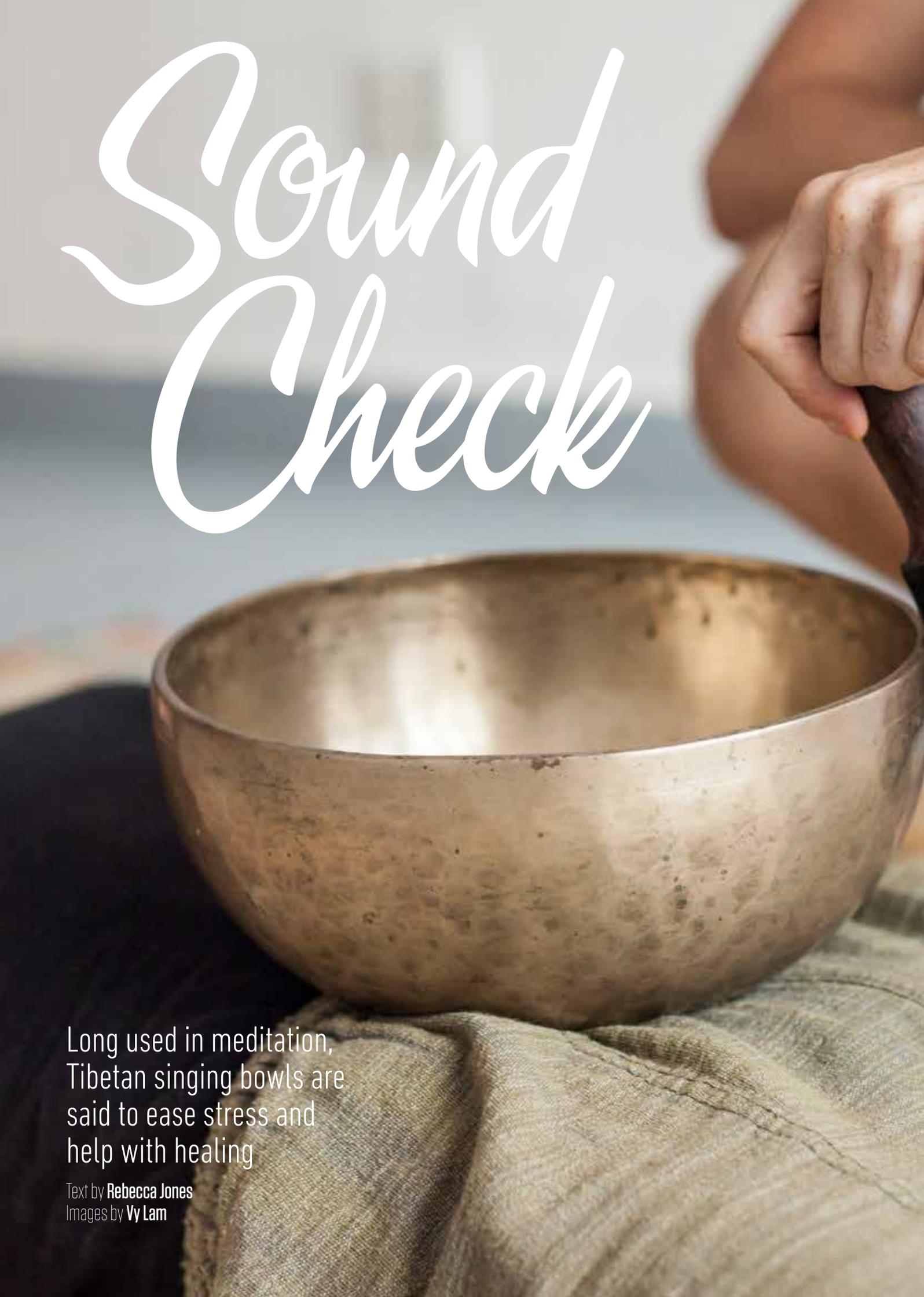


Live Well Be Well

Wellness is not an easy concept to define. Wellness definitions are as diverse and unique as each individual human being. Wellness is universal and understood cross culturally and inter-generational just as the arts, music, dance and love. So how do you maintain wellness? The solution is to focus on your whole body, mind and spirit, not to just rid your body from disease. The good news is, there are a few ways that you can care for yourself and focus on the importance of wellness in your life.



Sound Check



Long used in meditation,
Tibetan singing bowls are
said to ease stress and
help with healing

Text by **Rebecca Jones**
Images by **Vy Lam**

A FAIRLY ESTABLISHED THEORY IS THAT sounds, depending on their character, can be soothing. Ocean waves breaking gently on a sandy shoreline, or the sound of heavy rain on a sturdy rooftop when safe and dry in a warm, soft bed, for example (rather than on a flimsy xe om helmet during rush hour, which evokes a less than soothing array of emotions). And so it follows that sounds can, and frequently are, used for relaxation and healing.

The type of sound healing offered by Rae Dohar from her living room in Thao Dien involves large bowls crafted from seven types of precious metal in the Nepalese Himalayas. Placing the bowls around the body of her clients, the 31-year-old American yoga teacher, healer and psychic uses a pestle-like instrument crafted of wood and synthetic padding to generate a range of pitches and frequencies that are designed to stimulate chakras—or energy points—within the body.

As the name of the therapy suggests, the origin of the practice is Tibet, originally devised by the pre-Buddhist Bon people for use within ceremonies and rituals. The sounds emitted by the bowls are thought to relieve stress-related ailments, with some advocates promising better sleep, an improved memory, mental clarity and increased vitality. This, however, I discovered through a little Google-ing, as Rae herself prefers not to make any firm claims about the therapy, although she does acquiesce that she has had “a lot of success” with sleep disorders.

On why clients should or might come to her for this treatment, she says: “The intention, as I was taught, is that it should have a balancing effect. You have some strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others and so you leverage the openness of the chakras that function well in order to rejuvenate the others that don’t. Whether or not you have portals of energy down the central channel of your body I don’t know, but I do know that that the seven chakras correspond to nerve endings, which is interesting.”

Rae is careful to source the bowls that she uses in her sessions from traditional craftsmen in Nepal and so is confident of their authenticity and material composition. She does not spare any expense in ensuring the quality of her instruments, with each bowl costing something in the vicinity of USD200. “With the cheaper bowls you get a tinnier sound,” she says, adding that while she can’t be sure of how this affects the bowls’ healing properties, she prefers to use the best she can find for her hour-long sessions.

Ever-Increasing Circles

Sadly, time constraints meant that my session was shortened to half an hour, during which time we focussed on my crown and throat chakras, with a little root chakra thrown in at the end for good measure. Being stereotypically British, I was a little stiff at the beginning and so Rae recommended that I try to be more “zen.” Doing my best to follow her instructions, I assumed Shavasana—or corpse—pose (achievable for even the novice yogi) on a blanket on the floor and visualized gently flowing mountain streams as she placed the bowls around me.

The first was sounded by my right ear and generated a not unpleasant low-level hum that did—despite my Britishness—feel instantly soothing. Rae then moved to the alternate bowl where a complementary, higher pitched drone filled my left hemisphere, while a third bowl was struck just below by throat. Once one had stopped ringing Rae returned to restart it, with the order of play seeming to be circular. I discovered later that the intention is to create something like a loop or “double helix” shape of sound around the body.

She explained that the bowls ring for different



lengths of time for each client, corresponding to individual energies: “All of the bowls play two notes at one time. The high note is the ‘ya’ and the lower vibration is the ‘yin,’ and what tends to happen is that the body-mind-spirit complex absorbs the energy that it needs. So if what I hear left over is that high pitch sound for a longer period of time, I understand that chakra might have been overactive or compensating for other areas and so it’s going to absorb those yin sounds.”

As such each session can last up to 90 minutes, depending on how the bowls are responding to each client.

As the pitch of the sounds emanating from the bowls around my head reached their zenith, I started to feel a warm tingling sensation down my right side and, despite my attempts at zen, my concern over an impending seizure grew. However, I was distracted by the final stage of the session, in which Rae placed and struck the final bowl on top of my groin. The vibrations that pulsed out through its base were startling—it felt as if a super-sonic wave were thoroughly examining triplets (incidentally, the therapy is not suitable for pregnant women, or those with cancer).

Once the final bowl had ceased ringing we wrapped up and Rae and I discussed the session. She said she does not always give feedback on what she has sensed, as not everyone wants to know. I, however, was curious. She confided that she saw in me an ability to “be in rooms with people that [I] disagree with and be diplomatic,” while she could tell from the vibrations around my throat chakra that I was a strong communicator. Finally, she sensed I was a perfectionist—though a very productive one. I commented that these were all rather helpful abilities for a journalist. “Oh yeah! I guess so!” she beamed, as she rolled up the blanket, readying for her next client. ■

Tibetan Sound Healing with Rae Dohar (www.homeyogasaigon.com) is priced at USD55 for a 60- to 90-minute session.





TO ^A Perfect Escape Wellness

Nestled on the soft white sands of Vietnam's largest island, La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc, a member of the MGallery by Sofitel Collection, is an ideal tropical escape this summer for those who wish to gain the peacefulness of mind and the balance of body and soul.

Text and Images Provided by **La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc**



SURROUNDED BY IDYLIC

beaches and exotic tropical gardens, La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc boasts a natural feeling of a French-mansion-by-the-sea which was inspired by its founder Madame Catherine's storied family connection to Phu Quoc and colonial Indochine.

The authentic 1920s French colonial-style mansion on this picturesque island was a masterpiece of design by Madame Catherine who had been through her childhood during the height of French rule. Inspired by history, every detail of the 70 spacious rooms also evokes a more romantic era. Hand-painted mosaic tiles, four-poster king-size beds, local artworks and unique period collectibles combine to offer an enticing blend of authentic classical signatures and stylish Vietnamese themes. Boasting a spacious private balcony or terrace, each room is enhanced with soothing views of the lush tropical gardens which cocoon the resort,

or of the silvery sands and azure waters.

Let's imagine a quality time at La Veranda being well spent by indulging in a complimentary morning yoga by the beach, followed by a sunbath next to blue pastel sea umbrellas or pamper one's self with beach aromatherapy, and then immerse in the crystal-clear ocean.

An Escape to Wellness

Escape to Wellness, an exclusive package designed by La Veranda has just come on time for its valuable travellers this summer with a variety of benefits for mind-and-soul nourishing activities to help you on your way to a perfect state of good health.

Every day is kicked off to a serene start with yoga and meditation in the deeply relaxing surrounds of the resort, ideal for re-setting the mind and body. Take a step towards restoring inner harmony with a one-on-one neuromuscular consultation session aimed at promoting better awareness of your

body and connecting your mind to your muscles. Additionally, extend the wellness benefits of your holiday by learning relaxation skills to take home with you through our Touch Therapy Workshop which focuses on the art of Vietnamese massage.

Escape To Wellness Package rates start at USD160++/night for a Deluxe Garden, including all activities above, round-trip airport transfers, daily buffet breakfast, and complimentary use of bicycles and other sports utilities. As a special bonus, Escape to Wellness guests will also receive an excursion to stunning Sao Beach, a 7 km palm tree-backed stretch of turquoise waters and powdery white sand with complimentary sun chairs at the secluded Paradiso Beach Club.

A Sea & Spa Summer Break

Another highlight of this summer at La Veranda Resort MGallery By Sofitel is the Sea & Spa Summer Break package which is especially made for beneficiaries to have the reinvigoration achievement from the power of touch and the calm of the sea. However long your stay, the Sea & Spa program aims to restore your health and wellbeing with Movement + Relaxation + Power of Touch.

A morning comes with a yoga session by the sea with fresh breeze and natural sunlight in a tranquil surrounding of the resort to help gain the quietude for the soul and the soundness for the body. After time of awakening all senses, people are well prepared for a unique 60-minute Organic Massage Treatment at the acclaimed Le Spa where has been mastered the art of bringing the natural benefits of organic spa therapies to the human body. This intimate, elegant spa is the perfect place to relax and revive your spirits. The hands of Le Spa's expert therapists well mingled with La Veranda's organic, locally produced spa

products and treatments are all people's expectation and need to completely unwind in this island paradise.

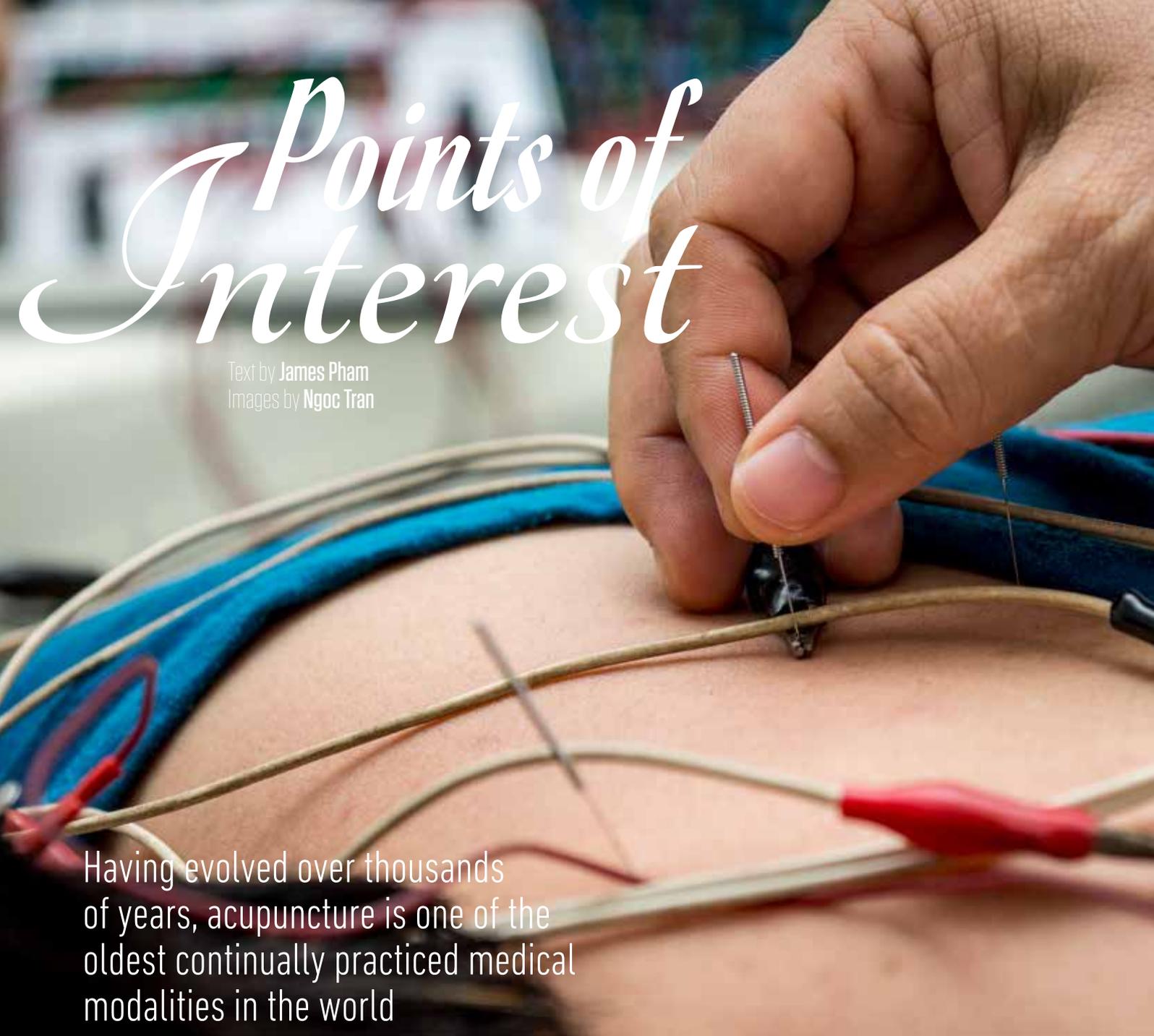
The journey to perfect wellness goes on with a one-on-one Neuro-muscular Balancing Analysis consultation session for the improvement and balance of body and mind. What awaits beneficiaries at the end of this package is to learn how to care and treat themselves well back home via a Touch Therapy Workshop for a deep relaxation practice of Vietnamese Massage.

Sea & Spa Summer Break Package rates start at USD200++/night for a Deluxe Garden, including all spa & wellness activities above, plus round-trip airport transfers, daily buffet breakfast, and complimentary use of bicycles and other sports utilities. Guests will also enjoy a special bonus to have a complimentary Sao Beach excursion with sun chairs at Paradiso Beach Club worth \$50.

The two packages Escape to Wellness and Sea & Spa Summer Break at La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc MGallery by Sofitel are available from May 1 to October 31, 2018. ■

For more information, visit: www.laverandaresorts.com





Points of Interest

Text by James Pham
Images by Ngoc Tran

Having evolved over thousands of years, acupuncture is one of the oldest continually practiced medical modalities in the world

THE CONVERSION OF THE

Apostle Paul is one of the most powerful scenes in the Bible. Formerly a rabid persecutor of the new religion of Christianity, St Paul was personally converted by Jesus, turning this once arrogant man into a humble “Apostle to the Nations.”

Tucked inside the quiet, palm tree-filled courtyard of St Paul’s Convent (4Bis Nguyen Trung Ngan, D1), is a life-size statue of the apostle himself, on the ground next to his horse, hand raised against the blinding light of the Lord, preparing him to accept a grandiose mission of spreading the gospel of hope. It’s fitting that in this compound, housing a large chapel, a theology school, a women’s dormitory, a wing for retired nuns and a kindergarten, lies a non-descript clinic whose mission is similarly to bring comfort to the city’s downtrodden.

Founded by Sister Anne (known as “Soeur Anne”) in 1980, the clinic houses

a physical therapy area and an Eastern medicine pharmacy, but it’s best known for its electro-acupuncture and laser therapy. “It started almost 35 years ago with only three beds in a dilapidated house down the street. I charged people just VND1,000,” says Sister Anne, now 75 years old with kind eyes and a soft voice, her flawless skin framed by a white habit. “I saw so many people suffering and in pain, abandoned and hopeless.”

Joining the convent at 15, Sister Anne trained to be a nurse at the former Clinique Saint-Paul (now the Ho Chi Minh City Eye Hospital). With the blessing of the convent, she opened a small clinic to serve the city’s poor. “It’s been all word-of-mouth since then,” says Sister Anne, reluctant to have her photo taken or to even talk about herself or bring any publicity to the clinic. “People who could donate beds or machinery. Now we help more than a hundred people a day. But that’s no reason to be prideful.

I just want people to know that we’re here to serve everyone, especially those who can’t afford regular medical care.”

The clinic charges only VND20,000 per acupuncture session (not including the cost of disposable needles), but even then, many cannot afford this modest sum. When that happens, more likely than not, Sister Anne simply waives off their debt with an understanding pat on the shoulder. “I’m always here in my office, so patients feel free to come in and talk to me. They tell me their stories. Most come in for pain relief from arthritis and joint problems. Some are rehabilitating after a stroke. We try to help everyone here, Catholic or not, poor and rich, foreigners and Vietnamese.”

To Soeur, With Love

The clinic hasn’t been Sister Anne’s only foray into charity work. As a young nun, she opened up a few classrooms for disadvantaged children. “The first was in



The Eastern medicine clinic is open from early morning to about 11am, Monday to Friday. While the suggested price is VND20,000 per acupuncture session (not including the cost of needles), additional donations are much appreciated.



District 8. I asked to use a woman's home to start a classroom. It was by a stinky river and at first, the stench was overwhelming," she recalls. "We started out with just a few students, but when parents heard what we were doing, they wanted to send their kids to us, kids who had quit school or who couldn't afford to go to school. We treated them with kindness and gave them little candies and cakes after class. They so loved it. They became serious about learning. But then the local school heard about what we were doing and stopped the classes. We subsequently opened up classrooms in Bach Dang (District 1), which at the time was full of drug addicts and in Cau Muoi (District 4). So many children were street kids, wandering the streets, shining shoes and doing who knows what. Now, though, the public schools are better, so we don't need to do that anymore."

Sister Anne leads us on a tour of the extensive grounds of the compound, mostly hidden from view by a plain perimeter wall. The sound

of children singing disrupts the peaceful silence, the way a gentle rain disrupts a sweltering Saigon afternoon. The children are from the 800-strong kindergarten on premises, practicing for a performance. Further down, the sound of pianos can be heard from another music class in session. Much as when it was inaugurated in 1864 as an orphanage for local street children, the convent today focuses on the well-being of the young. Services are held daily in the chapel for parents, children and the sisters, with public services only on Sundays. The nuns also operate a dormitory for female college students whose parents feel less anxious about their daughters alone in the big city under the care of the sisters. "We watch them very closely here, helping them avoid temptation. They have a curfew, which we build around their study schedule. It doesn't always work out, though. There was one very pretty girl..." remembers Sister Anne with a laugh, "she just couldn't stay in."

In the beautifully restored Gothic-style chapel, a handful of nuns sit in quiet meditation and prayer. "This church was practically destroyed by bombs during the war. I remember being so scared. They told us to leave for the provinces, but we couldn't. Who would take care of the place?" Sister Anne stops in front of a small statue of Jesus as a child, cradling a globe in his hands. "This was one of the only things that survived the bombing," she says fondly.

Sister Anne is eager to get back to the clinic, as a few patients have been patiently waiting to see her personally. "It's almost like we're a family," she says. "Some people come here so regularly, they start to talk to each other and help each other." Before we leave, there's only time for one final question about the role of religion in an increasingly secular world. Sister Anne pauses thoughtfully as she looks out onto the clinic, filled with people who have come seeking comfort. "I think religion has two missions: to spread the truth about the Lord, but also to show love. When you treat people with love, sometimes that's all they need." ■





Curious About *Cupping*

Cupping therapy is an ancient form of healing that has been used for many different purposes more than 3,500 years

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

CUPPING THERAPY, AN ANCIENT medical treatment where heated cups are placed on the skin to create suction that pulls blood to the skin's surface, has been around for at least five millennia. One of the oldest known medical textbooks, Ebers Papyrus, references Egyptians using cupping therapy as early as 1,550 BC. Cupping therapy is primarily used by people with backaches or inflammation, or those who simply want to promote better blood flow, but there are other benefits.

According to an article on positivehealthwellness.com by Karen Reed, there are numerous scientifically proven benefits to cupping therapy, which includes helping the body recover from weaknesses due to illness or malnutrition, helping the body



holding the fire inside the cup to heat it up. When she applied the cup to my skin, the skin immediately rose into the cup and reddened. What it didn't do was burn or cause any pain. It was a pleasing sensation, not unpleasant at all.

As the treatment continued she applied four different cups, and once the suction affixed them to my skin, she moved them around. There was slight discomfort as the pressure of the vacuum pulled the skin as the cups were moved, but it was nothing compared to the satisfying feeling of the blood flow flushing over my back, especially in places where I get muscle aches after working out. "If a muscle is really tight and compressed, it's not allowing blood into that area. If you don't have blood in that area it's going to be stagnant, so you need to open it. The pressure from the suction of the cups causes the area to open up and let blood flow into it." Johanna informed me.

Even though my back was covered in red and purple marks left from the cups, which Johanna assured me would be gone within five days, I left the treatment feeling not only physically better, but in a lighter mood as well. If I get any muscle aches or headaches in the future, I'd definitely undergo another cupping treatment.

My afternoon at Mandala was a lovely experience in a peaceful, friendly environment in the capable hands of Johanna, which I would highly recommend. Before I left, since Johanna is also an herbologist, I asked if there are any specific herbs or supplements she might recommend for better overall health. She said, "Turmeric reduces inflammation and everybody has inflammation, but if there's one supplement you should take it's omega 3 fish oil. By taking turmeric and fish oil your heart will be healthier, your immune system will be boosted, and your inflammation will go down." ■

fight dermatological issues like boils, abscesses or herpes, thwarting liver diseases by extracting impurities from the blood, improving blood circulation, treating gastrointestinal disorders, healing rheumatic diseases, as well as improving the functioning of the nervous system.

While cupping therapy has experienced a resurgence in popularity, you might not be so interested in lying on a piece of cardboard on a busy sidewalk in Ho Chi Minh City, with no shirt on, as a middle-aged man with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth applies heated cups to your back. Me neither. So I went a bit more upmarket to a villa in Thao Dien to experience my first cupping therapy session.

When I arrived at the spacious villa that Mandala Wellness (41 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2, mandala-wellness.com.vn) occupies I met Johanna Anderson, a licensed acupuncturist and herbologist who does the cupping therapy there. Though I've seen cupping being done on the sidewalks of Saigon or read the occasional article about a celebrity who underwent a cupping treatment, I was unfamiliar with its allure. As Johanna explained: "The main reason people come to me for cupping is pain. They have back pain, lower back pain, muscular pain—mainly muscles and tendons. So what it does in theory is bring blood and chi to that area and causes a healing sequence to happen. But it also affects the nervous system, and so it's also a good thing for lowering blood pressure. If you have a headache, you can do it on the shoulders and it'll get rid of the headache."

Another reason for receiving cupping treatment is to reduce cellulite. "Because what cellulite is trapped fat and toxins between a layer of muscle and tissue. Running the cups up and down on the

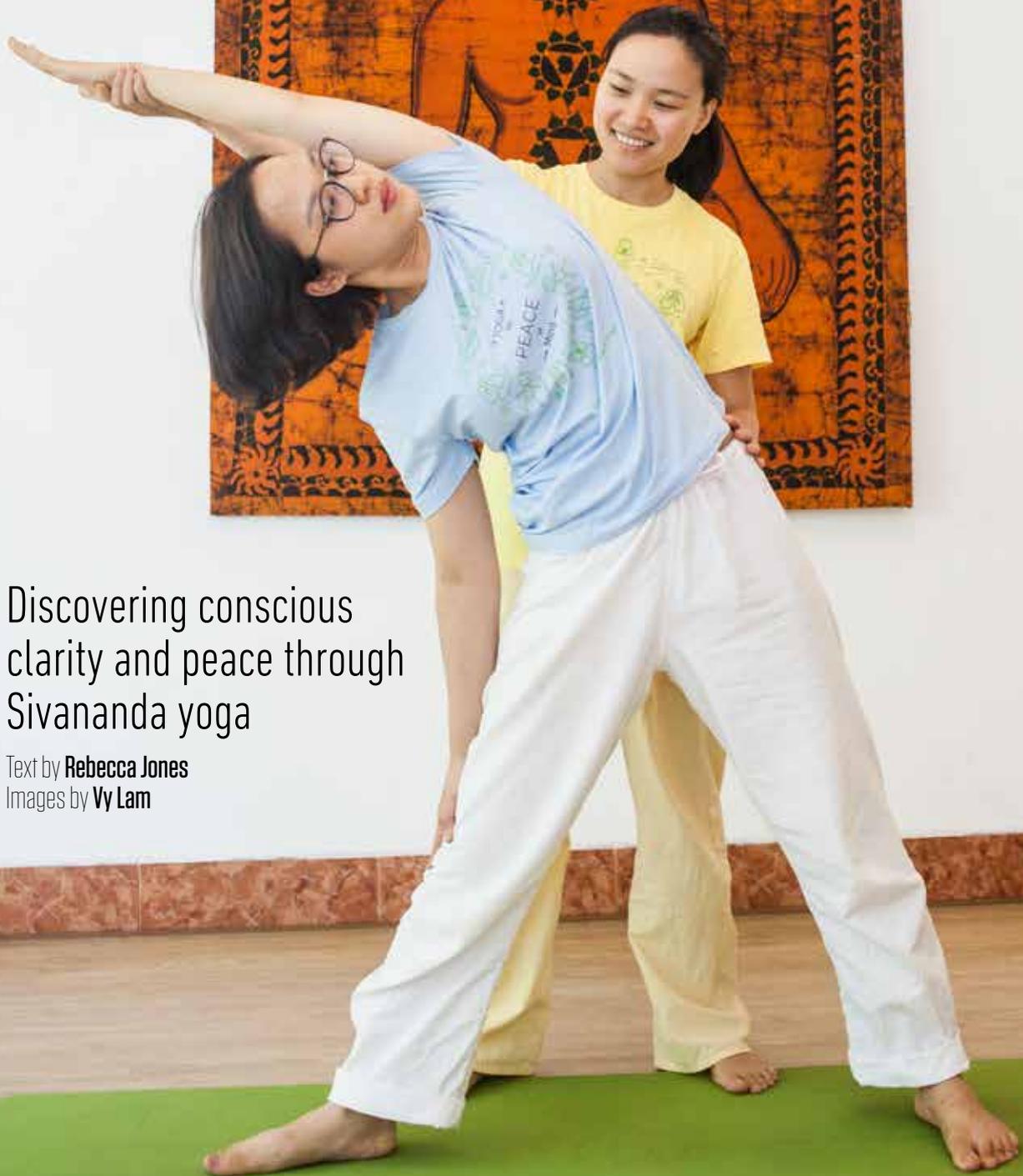
thighs and legs pulls the fat and toxins out, so it's actually an effective cellulite treatment," she added.

Before I took off my shirt and got onto the massage table, Johanna also mentioned that cupping can aid in detoxification regimens. "It untraps toxins, so it's a good detox. If you are one of those people who do a juice detox, then you might want to do cupping at the same time."

Although I love massage, cupping never appealed to me. I thought the marks it leaves on people's skin looked weird, and it seemed like it would be painful, not soothing, due to all that bruising. So I was a bit skeptical as I lied down. Johanna began the treatment by rubbing coconut oil on my back. She then took forceps to pick up what looked like a cotton ball, put some rubbing alcohol on it, and set it on fire,



From *Madonna* To *Enlightenment*



Discovering conscious
clarity and peace through
Sivananda yoga

Text by **Rebecca Jones**
Images by **Vy Lam**



MY FIRST EXPOSURE TO YOGA was, if I'm honest, through Madonna. I was 14 when the American pop icon relaunched herself as an earth mother with her *Ray of Light* album, attributing her new impressive, toned physique to the "Ashtanga" form of the practice. In pursuit of a similar set of triceps, I tried yoga in a handful of different gym classes at home in London, and like most Westerners I understood it purely as a form of exercise—and an unsatisfactory one at that.

It wasn't until I started taking classes with a teacher that had trained in India that I truly began to comprehend what yoga is. Unlike the gym classes I had taken before, these began with 30 minutes of breathing ("*pranayama*") and relaxation, while throughout the instructor talked about visualizing our past, present and future through postures, or "*asanas*." Soon I learned that yoga is not about getting ripped arms at all, but a holistic practice designed to bring body, mind and spirit into harmony.

Originally practiced by holy men in India thousands of years ago, at its core yoga practitioners seek to connect with God through discipline and religious devotion. The spiritual element is often lost on foreigners, however it is something that Hanh Nguyen, a Saigon native, connected with strongly on her visit to India. "A few years ago I visited Mayapur in north-east India and I stayed in The International Society for Krishna Consciousness. There I learned a lot about Krishna Consciousness, mainly about the existence of God, and I learned how to practice by chanting the Maha mantra."

Yoga For The Masses: Sivananda Yoga Chanting forms a central part of any holistic yoga practice, whether it be just the simple "om" mantra (thought to be the universal sound of existence) or full verses of Sanskrit devotions. I practiced both during my visit to the Sivananda Ashram in Neyyar Dam, South India this year, which is part of a network founded by one of India's foremost yoga gurus, Swami Sivananda. In the 1960s he and his disciple

Swami Vishnudevananda sought to spread the word of yoga throughout the world, and Sivananda Yoga is now practiced in nearly 40 venues globally.

Set among tropical forest at the mouth of a breathtaking lake, at the Neyyar Dam ashram I took part in three hours of meditation and chanting ("*satsang*"), four hours of asana practice and one hour of "karma yoga," or community service, every day. I also attended regular lectures on the Swami's and the finer points of yoga philosophy. Indeed, far from the place of idol ruminations and gentle stretching I had formerly imagined an ashram to be, here I was absorbed in activity from 5:30am—summoned by a shrill morning bell—until lights out at 10:30pm.

This was a gruelling schedule and one that I yo-yoed between love and hatred for on an almost hourly basis. However, through the fatigue I felt a connection with myself that Hang—a yoga practitioner as well as a spiritual enquirer—describes as a "smooth flow that runs from top to toe—a wonderful feeling." Intent on capturing this indescribable flow and mental clarity once again, upon returning to Ho Chi Minh City I joined the Sivananda Vedanta Center in Tan Dinh.

India To Vietnam: Yoga In Translation

The format of the asana classes at the Sivananda Ho Chi Minh City center are similar to those in India; each 90 minute session beginning with relaxation, chanting and *pranayama* before moving into *asanas* and finishing with a well earned period of lying very still on the floor. Unlike their new venue in Dalat, though, the HCMC center is not an ashram. Members can attend *satsang* on Wednesday and Sunday evenings, but they are free to come and go as they please, slotting the practice into their daily lives.

Seeking to get a sense of the work

that the Sivananda community does here I spoke to Ganga Chaitanya, director of the center. Born in Saigon, Ganga (her yogic name) discovered Sivananda yoga while living and studying in the US and has been involved with the Ho Chi Minh City house since its establishment in 2011. She is a strong believer in the benefits of Sivananda yoga for Vietnamese people—who accounts for 70 percent of the center's visitors—especially those that live in hectic Ho Chi Minh City:

"Vietnamese, especially women, are strong, and we are very busy and active people. Our ambition at the Sivananda center is to try to bring people to have more awareness of their health and happiness and how they can get more peaceful, while still living their lives. We teach what we can: from yoga for children to pain management to singing. People can change the way they feel through yoga, especially how they respond to stress and anger."

As a case in point, Ganga gives an example of a local woman who arrived at the center raving that the trial class wasn't starting at the time she wanted. However, so inspired was she by the calm way in which the staff responded to her screaming and shouting that she came back at the right time anyway. She is now a regular attendee and, apparently, a changed woman. This, says Ganga, is the goal for the staff at the center—all of which volunteer to manage the household and provide classes while deepening their own practice and understanding.

This, perhaps, neatly encapsulates the true spirit of yoga: service, dedicated practice and devotion to a higher form of consciousness. According to Ganga, it is only through living in harmony with the people and the natural world around us that we can truly come to understand where we fit into it. And it is only through communing with our own minds and bodies that we can come to see our path and walk it as we strive towards the ultimate goal of yoga, if not all religions: self-realization. ■

To find out more about the Sivananda Vedanta Centre in Ho Chi Minh City, or the Sivananda Ashram in Dalat, visit: sivanandayogavietnam.org. And for information on Sivananda centers in India, visit: sivananda.org.in.



A woman is seen from behind, sitting in a hot spring. She has her hair pulled back and is holding several pink flowers behind her head. The water is dark and bubbling, with several glowing lights floating on the surface. The background is dark, suggesting an outdoor setting at night or dusk.

Wellness Wishes

In conversation with Thuy Do, a wellness consultant and owner of www.wellnessvietnam.com and Nguyen Thi Nhung, Co-Owner of Alba Wellness Resort, about traveling to heal the mind and body, and how Vietnam can develop within this market

Images Provided by **Alba Wellness Resort**

How would you define "wellness travel" and why is it such a growing sector?

Thuy: Wellness travel is when travelers travel with the intent of improving their health, which could be for reasons such as mental (de-stress), physical (to get fit or weight loss), and spiritual (meditation, yoga). Normally, it is not the sole reason for travel, as most wellness travel is secondary, meaning they combine wellness with their holiday, as opposed to traveling for the primary purpose of travel (which is often the case for medical tourism).

One of the main driving factors for the growth of the wellness industry is the global rise in chronic diseases (cancer, stress), which are lifestyle related (diet and exercise). For wellness travel, it is driven mainly by people seeking relief from stress or addressing weight issues. In this case, they will be seeking spa treatments or a stay at a resort that offers spa and wellness services.

Nhung: According to the last Wellness Summit, wellness tourism reached USD500 billion in 2016 and is growing fast. In this market, the spa industry accounts for USD100 billion while the thermal water represents USD60 billion worldwide. We can define wellness tourism as travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being. Individual health and well-being are universal desires shared by people across all ages, incomes, beliefs, cultures, and continents. In recent years, however, an ever-growing number of wellness-minded consumers have been integrating healthy habits and activities into their travels.

In comparison to other better-known Asian wellness destinations like Thailand and Indonesia (Bali), what does Vietnam have to offer?

Thuy: Vietnam has an ancient traditional

medicine system, very much similar to Chinese Traditional Medicine. So in this regard, it is difficult to promote it as authentically Vietnamese when people will look to acupuncture, herbal medicine, and moxibustion as originating from China.

Vietnam has Idyllic locations such as the highlands of Dalat, which was actually where the French originally established a hill station for rest & relaxation, so the city itself already has a history as a place for rest and recovery. Sapa is home to a number of ethnic minority peoples. The Red Dzao people are known for their herbal medicine, which are handpicked from the forests. Most popular is the herbal bath, which comprises of a dozen different kinds of herbs to help relieve an array of ailments including skin, circulation and arthritis. Nha Trang is known for its hot spring mud baths. Also thanks

to Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen Buddhist master originally from Hue, who has brought more awareness to Vietnam as a spiritual destination. Hue and Dalat are popular destinations for meditation and mindfulness retreats.

The challenge is the Vietnamese wellness doesn't have a clear identity. Thailand based theirs on Buddhist yoga and meditation and have their own unique Thai massage. The Indonesians have their Jamu (herbal drink and herbal treatments) and Balinese their traditional 'lulur' body treatments based on traditional beauty and health care. The Indian traditional medicine system is based on Ayurveda, which stems back thousands of years.

So in many of these resorts, you'll find wellness offerings adapted from other countries such as Ayurvedic treatments in Fusion Maia Phu Quoc, Balinese spa concept at Annam in Cam Ranh, sound healing at Four Seasons The Nam Hai, and onsen concept at Alba Wellness in Hue.

Nhung: Vietnam is renown for its unique scenery, delicious food and the kindness of its people. Something less known is Vietnam's long tradition of wellness for the body and the mind. Confucianism, from which the Vietnamese way life is derived, says that happiness can be enjoyed chiefly through long life and this philosophy has been engrained into our culture, some routines are now practiced every day. The most visible one is a majority of the population waking up early and practicing exercises on the street, like tai chi, martial arts, dancing or basic stretching movements. Another routine is our focus on healthy food, in which vegetables play a central role, and an increasing portion of the population have become vegetarian. But long life is not only a "body" affair and Confucianism, as well as Buddhism, have taught us for centuries the importance of working on the mind to increase life



expectancy. Many of us practice daily meditation sessions and join occasional teachings by monks about how to improve happiness by calming our mind and rejecting poisonous negative emotions. These are just example of daily wellness practices in Vietnam.

What do you think Vietnam (government, private sector, travel agents, etc.) needs to do to market itself as a wellness destination?

Thuy: First of all there isn't a wellness association like other countries (Thailand and Bali) whose members have an organized mission to promote wellness tourism in their respective countries. Currently in Vietnam, each individual/business are promoting themselves. For Vietnam to market itself as a wellness destination, there needs to be recognition that wellness can contribute significantly to tourism revenue. There doesn't necessarily need to be a separate association, but key parties like big name resorts where spa and wellness is a big part of their business (i.e., Six Senses, Fusion Maia) can work with VNAT to promote Vietnam as a wellness destination.

Nhung: When you look at directories,

websites or magazines specializing in wellness, Vietnam rarely appears as a wellness destination for travelers. This needs to change. Specialized wellness operators, like us, need to engage in a specific communication plan abroad to show our unique facilities and activities in the field of wellness. The government, for example, can increase the exposure of Vietnam's hot springs to the overseas market, making Vietnam a distinctive destination.

What success stories have you seen (for example, properties that have marketed themselves as wellness destinations) or what properties/initiatives do you see as having potential?

Thuy: Eight years ago, Fusion Maia Danang took the big risk by including spa treatments in their room rate, and by building one of the biggest resort spas in the country (16 double rooms). They also introduced a Natural Living program, which was a 'soft wellness' version so as to not turn away guests who are not health conscious. Since then, the resort has found huge success due to the global trend of spa goers and increasing interests in wellness holidays.

Six Senses have been a frontrunner in the wellness scene way before it is as popular as it is today. They have moved beyond spas to a more serious approach to wellness, and that is to offer 'results oriented' wellness, meaning you can measure the outcomes. By taking this approach, they have had to enter the world of Western medicine and seek advice from professionals in both Western and integrative medicine to develop wellness programs that offer tangible results.

The local wellness community is thriving. As you know with the increase of food contamination, pollution and stress, it is driving local consumers to seek means of addressing these issues. So there is a boom in the fresh juice business, yoga, fitness and healthy eating. The local consumers actually offer a lot of potential. I see the next trend is middle income and wealthy people starting to take wellness related holidays. ■



Wine & Dine

DINING WITH BEEF - LAMB / IMAGE PROVIDED BY SMALL VACANCY







Hip to be *Square*

Conquering Novotel Saigon
Centre's Seafood Buffet

Text by James Pham
Images by Vy Lam

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF

people in life—those who plan and those who embrace the spontaneity of the unexpected. I fall into the first category and on a warm Friday evening, find myself mapping out a strategy to conquer the wonderfully formidable seafood buffet at **The Square, Novotel Saigon Centre's** signature restaurant (167 Hai Ba Trung, D3).

The Square serves up all-day buffet and a la carte offerings in a contemporary setting mixing honey-colored wood floors with a soothing, earthy color scheme of greens, tans and beiges. While the spacious open concept restaurant has various seating setups, including brightly-lit booths and family-style long tables (which tonight are being used by what looks to be a jovial office party), the intimate tables by the windows enjoy softer mood lighting, made all the more atmospheric by the soundtrack of breathy, jazzy covers of popular tunes. We arrange to arrive early and snag a table by the floor-to-ceiling windows, the headlights from motorbikes and cars below dancing like fireflies.

We case the gorgeous food displays, conveniently arranged on islands and along a long counter by the open kitchen and grill area, gleefully strategizing our forays to maximize the offerings. Novotel Saigon evening buffet is known across the city for its incredibly fresh and plentiful seafood selection. A simple Vietnamese dipping sauce of salt, pepper and a squeeze of lime add brightness to the crab, mussels, jumbo shrimp and slipper lobster. I put blinders on to the bevy of tantalizing salads on offer, many artfully served in carved out namesake fruit, like the watermelon and parma ham or the pomelo with sliced pork. I make an exception to my No Salad Rule for the Thai salad with swimmer crab, the julienned cucumbers and onions adding a crunchy component to the chunks of crab tossed in a light fish sauce-based vinaigrette, as well as the mango salad with prawn, a tropical burst of mango that complements the natural sweetness of the whole, peeled jumbo shrimp.

The Square offers a fine selection of meats that would star in any respectable Sunday dinner lineup and we sample the slow-roasted beef accompanied by a rich mushroom sauce, crispy pork belly with sweet plum sauce, and a delicately flaky salmon Wellington.

However, the crown jewel of the buffet is the fresh seafood cooked to order in a show kitchen with a massive gas-fired oven. We select our proteins and cooking techniques, placing an order with the waiter and soon the grilled seafood materializes at our table – rock lobsters with garlic butter, slipper lobsters smoky with melted cheese, and scallops topped with scallion oil and peanuts. We take advantage of the extensive list of cooking



methods and order dueling white and surf clams, half steamed in a spicy Thai broth chockfull of fragrant lemongrass and kicky bird's eye chilies and the other half steamed Vietnamese-style in lemongrass and basil leaves which bring out the natural sweetness of the clams. I spy oysters Rockefeller on the list, a rare treat, and order four hearty oysters topped with spinach, cheese and ham with a perfectly toasted crust of bread crumbs. They more than live up to their name, so rich with butter and cheese, they were named after the richest man of the day. We have slices of orange between each of our many gluttonous plates, the acid serving to brighten the palate and balance out the richness of the meal.

The Square prides itself on its homemade desserts which occupy their own large island, daring diners to leave room for colorful macarons, light-as-air panna cottas and decadent baked goods. I choose a red and black theme just for kicks, limiting myself to a beautiful opera cake filled with fresh strawberries, a flaky berry tart and a scoop of rich chocolate ice cream topped with berry compote, fresh whipped cream and a sprinkling of pistachio nuts.

While there were regrettably dishes left untried, we are thoroughly satiated and have most definitely gotten our money's worth from this superb meal. We head out into the night, already planning our next assault on this most decadent of Saigon seafood buffets. ■



*The nightly seafood buffet at Novotel Saigon Centre is priced at VND 1,109,000++.
Upgrade to a free flow drink package including wine, beer, soft drinks and juices for an additional VND 250,000++.*



Let's Do *Brunch*

Brunch is no longer reserved for Sundays

Text by Nick Piggott
Images by Vy Lam



Eggs benedict



I BOOKED THE Craft Beer Brunch at Rbar at the **Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon** (8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1) as a treat to ourselves at the end of a hard week, hoping beyond hope that it would live up to expectations. Having intermittently tried a few of the Sunday brunches on offer in Saigon, I had got used to the 'acceptable' brunch offerings across the city. But the Renaissance have decided to buck the Sunday trend and offer brunch on a Saturday instead, pairing it with the now ubiquitous Pasteur Street craft beers.

The brunch has been running for just over a year, and was conceived for businessmen and business travelers who still need to work on weekends, but want to do so in a more relaxed atmosphere. The brunch runs in tandem with the mid-week craft beer parties they run every Wednesday evening, where the concept, price and food is largely the same, with some variation in the hot-dish menu.

As part of the Marriott hotel chain, which operates 160 hotels in 35 countries, the service and décor at Rbar, in the lobby of the Renaissance hotel are what you would expect. Elegant and refined, you could be almost anywhere in the world. Unless, that is, you manage to snag a seat next to the wall-to-ceiling windows which look out onto the hectic frenzy of the Me Linh roundabout at the foot of Hai Ba Trung, overlooked by Tran Hung Dao's stern statue. There's a wonderful juxtaposition of the perfect calm inside the bar, with the gentle

melodies of the excellent live band washing over you, while Grab drivers scatter pedestrians across the pavement just the other side of the glass.

Running from 11:30am – 2:00pm and setting us back VND690,000++ each, we arrived promptly, eager to make the most of the buffet. The generously poured, free-flow prosecco & mimosas are a great way to start the morning, accompanying the cheese platter, charcuterie and artisanal breads in a wonderful French combination. Alongside the buffet there is a great range of hot dishes, all made to order fresh from the kitchen. Picking a brunch classic (eggs benedict) and a local favorite (crispy friend octopus), we also made the move from mimosa to craft beer. The eggs benedict were poached beautifully—with a firm white and an oozing, creamy yoke. There was no hollandaise sauce, but the bed of rocket was wonderfully tangy and sharp, and the base was a firm, roti-like bread. The generous portion of crispy octopus came piled high in a wicker basket, and was tender and crisp. Served with a rich, creamy sauce, there was just a touch of spice. Both of these dishes were complemented by Pasteur Street's predictably good Jasmine IPA, and the lemongrass wheatbeer.

The super attentive staff were always on-hand to top up drinks and take hot food orders, but managed to do so without being obtrusive, melting through the other guests to deliver or collect



Crispy fried octopus

empty plates and glasses. The soundtrack to the morning was provided by a wonderful Filipino trio, whose flawless reproductions spanned lounge classics (think Ratpack), 90s rock (Oasis), and the latest pop. I'd never actually liked a Justin Bieber song until that morning, but their version of *Love Yourself* was really something else.

Ending our gluttonous session with a bang, we gorged ourselves on the cute-as-a-button desserts, which were all miniature versions of summer pudding classics: fruit salad in teeny classes, miniature trifles, pink coconut lamingtons and a platter of crispy-coated chocolate truffles. Accompanied by a strong, tasty coffee, we rolled out of Rbar with not an inch of room left, feeling thoroughly pleased with ourselves. Saturday brunch at RBar is definitely a treat we'll deserve again, and soon. ■

Small ^{Is} The New Big

Saigon's newest restaurant serving creative Italian cuisine and big dreams

Text by Michael Arnold
Images Provided by Small Vacancy



IT'S OFTEN TRUE THAT THE MOST memorable dining venues aren't the ones that are easiest to spot. You won't walk past **Small Vacancy - Lounge & Dining**—it's hidden away in the corner of the alley at 178/4B Pasteur, D1—but this striking venue with its intimate lighting, discrete seating, bold teak color scheme and melding of traditional British tea room with modern American industrial design is one that is likely to become a word-of-mouth sensation.

Everything you need to know about the venue's physical and conceptual positioning comes from its tagline, "small vacancy to dream big." You can interpret the word "vacancy" here to refer to that zen-like emptiness that serves as a

Beef Tenderloin



reservoir for pure creative potential, and conclude that this dining spot is conceived of as an opening where that potential can take root. To co-founder Truong Thoai Yen (who opened the restaurant with two like-minded business partners, Hieu and Linh), taking the plunge into the F&B industry represented a significant departure from her comfort zone in the pursuit of a new dream; the defining emotion of that process became Small Vacancy's *raison d'être*, and the interior was thus styled as far as possible to stimulate and inspire dreamers, with each corner of the venue's dining areas given their own distinctive look and atmosphere. What emerged on opening day just over a month ago was a restaurant that aims to provide a sense of privacy and relaxation, while being located at the end of an alleyway that you may have sailed past a thousand times without noticing it, away from the crowds and yet still remaining at the very center of Saigon.

We begin our meal with a very good reason to visit Small Vacancy on its own—a stiff drink. The restaurant's nine signature cocktails (VND129,000) are the creation of mixologist Miss Nhu, the daughter of a winemaker whose specialty mixer syrups



Tiramisu



Little Soft

derived from fresh Dalat fruits lend a startling energy to each glass. Our Vacancy Margarita bears exotic whiffs of cinnamon and star anise over a zesty citrus base, while the Little Soft cushions astringent pockets of lime with its creamy vanilla and egg white froth. They come served with a twist of caramel toffee in unusually artistic glasses that are locally made, and in the case of the fruity hazelnut oska and the kumquat mojito, the liquor comes in a small bottle so that the drinker can adjust the strength of the mix at the table. Small Vacancy's ground floor bar area welcomes those who arrive solely for the drinks (Happy Hour is 3pm–7pm, buy one get one free), so this venue is equally as good for an after-work tittle as it is for a meal.

Don't skip dinner, though—Small Vacancy offers a tight menu of Italian-based cuisine with occasional fusion crossovers that has been specially created by Chef Nghe (formerly of Basilico), each dish lovingly prepared and beautifully plated, as well as forgivingly priced. Appetizers are



Lamb Rack

salad-focussed; we enjoyed a light octopus carpaccio (VND129,000) featuring a salad with cherry tomatoes, orange, arugula (sometimes swapped for another green depending on availability) and red & black caviar that blended particularly well with the house garlic dressing. Other easy starters can be selected from the tapas menu, which consciously involves more Asian elements: our Mussels Three Ways (VND69,000) is the best-seller with its platter of three baked mussels caked in bread crumbs, mozzarella cheese and arrabiata sauce respectively. The flavors were warm and gently muted. Also of note is the prawn cocktail (VND59,000) served fresh with romaine lettuce and cocktail sauce.

Our mains were flawless, five-star presentation meal items that were well-balanced and perfectly comfortable on the palate. It's a notably tight list of mains items with just six options to choose from; according to Thoai Yen, this limitation is a conscious choice to focus on the best potential dishes available and avoid a distractingly baroque menu. The drinks list is far more extensive by comparison; we opted for a safe Frontera Chilean chardonnay that comes at VND95,000 by the glass. We tried a delicious grilled New Zealand lamb rack (VND279,000) with a traditional red wine mint sauce and creamy potato puree. Our beef tenderloin (VND319,000) was pleasantly mild; the purple sweet potato puree is the local element that gives the dish a gently exotic touch. Small Vacancy's desserts menu is similarly concise; we chose a panna cotta passionfruit (VND59,000) and a tiramisu (VND79,000). Both of these, like every dish at this restaurant, were conspicuously enhanced by flavors and sauces (particularly the panna cotta) and otherwise well-prepared and pleasurable.

Small Vacancy is itself a pleasure; the location is intimate and safe, the décor visually stimulating, and the overall vibe of the venue does lend itself to conversation, contemplation, and perhaps the spark of big dreams to reach for in future. Spread the word. ■



Chicken Biryani

CHICKEN BIRYANI BRINGS BACK memories from my initial days of being married. My mother-in-law was very fond of chicken biryani, and whenever my husband and I would step out for dinner alone she would ask us to get a take away of the biryani, and soon it became an unsaid rule any time we went

out. It was a real pleasure to watch her eat her favorite chicken biryani. She's since passed away but every time I cook chicken biryani I so wish that she could be the first one to taste it. The word "biryani" is derived from the Persian word "birian", which means "fried before cooking" and "birinj", the

Persian word for rice. There are various theories related to the origin of this scrumptious dish. Many historians believe that biryani originated from Persia and was brought to India by the Mughals. Biryani was further developed in the Mughal royal kitchen. ■



Ruchita Obhan was a former advertising professional and is now a self-styled home cook by passion. She recently won the "Home Chef" category in a charity cook off event in Saigon. Having hosted countless house parties across four countries, including Vietnam, she became passionate about culinary art.

Follow Ruchita:
Facebook Page: ruch bytes and
Instagram: ruch.bytes.

INGREDIENTS

Chicken Marinade

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 10 grams garlic (grated)
- 10 grams ginger (grated)
- Chili powder (to taste)
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- Hung curd or thick plain yogurt
- Salt to taste
- 750 grams skinless chicken (I used leg pieces)

For Rice

- 6 cups water
- Salt to taste
- 5 pods green cardamom (smashed)
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 2 bay leaves
- Basmati rice (~2 cups)

For Garnishing and Cooking

- 3-4 tablespoons ghee (clarified butter)

- 2 medium onions (sliced thin)
- 10-15 cashews
- Handful cilantro leaves
- Handful mint leaves
- ½ cup milk
- Few strands of saffron
- 1-2 bay leaves
- Few black peppercorns
- 1 cinnamon stick

1 Heat 2 tablespoons of ghee in a wok and fry onion slices till golden brown. Drain and place on an absorbent paper. Fry cashews till slightly brown, drain and place on an absorbent paper. Put the strands of saffron in the milk and set aside.

2 Now, take chicken pieces in a bowl. Add grated ginger, grated garlic, salt and mix well. Add the *garam masala* powder, red chili powder, half of the fried onions, yogurt and 1 tablespoon of oil and mix. Let it marinate for about two hours.



3 Heat water in a deep pan and add rice, salt, bay leaves, five green cardamoms, one cinnamon stick and cook till three-fourth done. Drain the water and set aside.



4 Heat two tablespoons of ghee in a pan; add cinnamon sticks, bay leaves, black peppercorns and sauté. Add marinated chicken, stir and cook on high heat for three to four minutes. Cover, reduce heat and cook till almost done.

5 Now heat a spoonful of ghee in a thick-bottomed pan. Spread half the pre-cooked rice into a layer. Spread the chicken over the rice. Sprinkle torn mint leaves. Spread the remaining rice on top of the chicken layer. Garnish it with remaining fried onions, cilantro leaves, fried cashews and sprinkle saffron milk. Cover and cook under dum for 15-20 minutes on a very low fire. (Dum basically means that the steam should not escape out and the contents are cooked on very low fire. You can achieve this by sealing it with flour dough or putting weights on the top of the lid.)



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

ZERO WASTE WINE

How to become a wine-without-waste drinker

IT SEEMS THAT FINALLY THE zero waste movement is taking off in Saigon with some great people working very hard, and usually for free, to change minds and habits in Vietnam, and turn this lovely country into a much lovelier, cleaner one. But if you are a wine drinker, and you favor zero waste and the environment, is there anything you can do to support this while still enjoying great wine?

Yes, you can start by telling your suppliers what you want from the point of view of buying and drinking what we call “greener wines.” Not green because of the color or because its high acidity (which is where the name *vinho verde* comes from in Portugal), but regarding how wines are being produced and transported.

The first problem you will find is that most wineries selling wine to Asia and Vietnam follow the country’s demand for packaging in order to sell more. Sadly, in most Asian countries customers favor big heavy bottles that look better, and because wine is still a preferred luxury present for many, they chose the heaviest bottles available. In fact, many wineries offer the same wine with different bottle (and price) options. So start by saying no to heavy bottles: The quality and weight of the glass will not affect the taste or quality of the wine, but will definitely affect the CO₂ emissions needed for its production and transport. A ‘premium’ bottle can weigh over three times that of a normal or lightweight one. Some countries, like Canada, are in the process of making it unlawful to ship wine in bottles over a certain weight.

The second way you can help the environment is by saying no to the extra packaging. Here again Vietnam follows most of Asia where people are willing

to pay more for the packaging than for the wine, and most of the nice looking luxury packaged wines are low-end wines in a beautiful boxes. That’s okay if you don’t plan to drink them; it’s like having a Ferrari with no engine.

But perhaps where you can make the biggest difference, and not only within Vietnam’s scope, is when you are picky about how wines are being produced. If you visit commercial wineries, and many of the popular brands are, you will see that in most of these places wine production does not differ much from any manufacturing facility. Almost everything is mechanized, huge consumption of electricity from pressing to delivering the wines. But the problems don’t end there because the care of the vineyards and wine making process are also affected by the huge usage of pesticides and many other chemical products that not only affect the environment but also your body.

If you want to avoid this, ask your suppliers about how their particular wines are being made, and if they don’t know, it means they did not or question it while sourcing. In general, organic wines are likely to be more environmentally friendly and nowadays taste as good, if not better, than normal wines. You can also inquire about the wineries, for example boutique wineries like Aroa in Northern Spain are certified not only organic but to produce zero CO₂ emission. There are many more like them, so let’s go green! ■



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.lemeridiensaigon.com



MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



BiaCraft

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

90 Xuan Thuy, D2



East West Brewery

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

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



Rehab Station

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

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

CAFÉS



Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.caferunam.com



Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



K.Coffee

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

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM (Sunday closed)
86 Hoang Dieu, D.4 - 38253316/090 142 3103



La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



Le Bacoulos is a French brasserie located in the heart of Thao Dien. Following the brasserie tradition, Bacoulos serves typical French food at affordable prices.



French Restaurant

Daily Set Lunch
at **VND180.000**

2 courses + 1 soft drink

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

02835194058



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

FRENCH



Le 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



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



ITALIAN



Carpaccio

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

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



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



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



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

JAPANESE



Chaya Restaurant

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

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



Gyumaru

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

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



Ichiban Sushi

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

204 Le Lai, D1
www.ichibansushi.vn



Kesera Bar & Restaurant

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

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



Sushi Dining Aoi

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

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



VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters

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



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



River Restaurant

Tasty Vietnamese food by Saigon River side. The River Restaurant has its' own vegetable garden and a play area for kids. There is a pool table and a futsal table.

199bis Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien Ward, D2, HCMC
Tel: 0907 65 66 67



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 décor, 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
connieusaigon27@yahoo.com
connieusaigon.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.

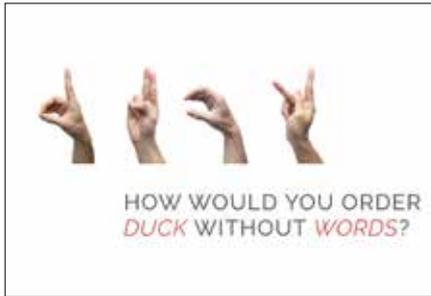
Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

028 6263 6688

www.lemeridien.com/saigon

For restaurant promotions go to fest.vn or Call 1900636997



Blanc Restaurant

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

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

02862663535

www.blancrestaurant.vn



FORK Restaurant

Open from 11 am till 11 pm everyday, Fork Saigon gathers Spanish tapas and asian one going from 50,000 VND to 160,000 VND. It offers an expensive list of international wine and 16 available by the glass. A mixologist corner is also present with Gin and Vodka base in addition to local craft beers and seasonal white or red sangria. A set lunch at 190,000 VND served Monday to Friday from 11 am to 3 pm is also available. It allows you to pick any 3 three items between a large selection (Montaditos, meat, fish and vegetable), iced tea and dessert of the day included.

15 Dong Du, D1

028 3823 3597

info@forksaigon.com

www.forksaigon.com



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/>



Madcow Wine & Grill

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

30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre

(0)28 3838 8686



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



Noir - Dining in the Dark

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

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

02862632525

www.noirdininginthedark.com



Tomatito Saigon

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

171 Calmette, Dist 1, Ho Chi Minh City

www.crhcmc.com/tomatito

www.facebook.com/crhcmc

+84 (0) 2862 881717



twenty21one

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

Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese. There are two dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs are tables with both private and exposed positioning (open-air street-side, and a terrace by the pool out back).

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Travel & Wellness

HUE - GIA LONG TOMB/IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM







A Body

at

REST

Searching for serenity in the city of Hue

Text and Images by James Pham

BETWEEN FRAZZLED EXPATS trying to balance work and the stresses of life in a tropical country and visitors looking to cram an impossibly long list of must-sees into a three-week itinerary, Vietnam is not exactly known as a restful destination.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Hue where nearly 4 million tourists last year likely spent just a day in the former imperial city, visiting the Citadel and the royal tombs on a blur of guided tours. While international visitors spent an average of USD 102 per night in Vietnam according to a 2014 survey, those who visited Hue spent the least of anywhere, coming in at just over USD 75, with many opting to skip on to nearby Danang or Hoi An instead.

In this city dismissed by so many as

only deserving of a harried day trip with no time to stop, I embark on a mission to discover rest in all its forms.

I begin by setting out to the royal tombs, the site of eternal rest for the emperors of the Nguyen dynasty. On a steaming hot morning, we find ourselves driving by the gleaming white buses parked in front of the Khai Dinh Tomb disgorging their throngs of equally white-headed sheeple. However, I'm not drawn to the bling of the Khai Dinh Tomb or even the grandeur of the Minh Mang Tomb, well-worn stops on the "Hue in a Day" itinerary. Instead, we continue into the Hue countryside to a tomb that's distinctly different from the others and rarely visited by tourists or even locals. Switchbacks and little-used roads lead us past landscapes made up

of so many shades of green they could fill their own special-edition Crayola box - neat rows of pickle-colored peanut plants, fields of young rice so vividly emerald they almost hurt our eyes to look at, backed by the unexpected darker greens of pine forests blanketing the hillsides.

Some 20 kms from Hue, we find ourselves at the tomb of Gia Long, founder of the Nguyen dynasty. Being the farthest tomb from the city means it's well off the beaten path. There's not even a ticket booth, only a sleepy guard who rouses himself from mid-day lethargy, giddy to have someone to talk to other than the stone statues that line the courtyard. He prattles on good-naturedly as we wander the beautifully restored tomb, its yellow glazed tiles



An Hien Garden House

and red wooden doors reminiscent of Beijing's Forbidden City writ small. Aside from the simple, well-kept collection of buildings, the serenity of the grounds is equally captivating. In place of stone walls, the tomb is surrounded by 42 hills, each with its own name. Stone horses and elephants overlook a gigantic lotus pond. We're the only ones here, the only ones to hear the whispers of history echoing amidst the old pines.

However, if the Tomb of Gia Long whispers with refreshing simplicity, the Tomb of Khai Dinh absolutely screams with opulence. On the way back to Hue, we stop in at this memorial to the flamboyant emperor cum designer. Only a handful of visitors are around, the tour groups no doubt halfway through the soup course of their set lunches. We

gawk at this ostentatious mix of glass and ceramic-adorned walls, moody painted ceilings featuring fearsome dragons and swirling clouds, and materials imported from France including a golden effigy of the king. Apparently, an abundance of glitter is required for sweet dreams in the afterlife.

Proving what's good for the king is also good for the people, the coastal community of An Bang has been putting together its own collection of over-the-top tombs. In the tumultuous years after the war, the fishermen here found themselves with an unexpectedly valuable resource—seaworthy boats capable of making it to Hong Kong and on to a life overseas. It's said that half of the village was able to make it abroad and by the mid-90s, money

started pouring back to the relatives left behind. We notice the houses in the village are nicer than average, multi-story with gleaming tile and brick facades, some with granite or marble pillars. But it's in the "ghost city" beyond where the ancestors slumber in sumptuousness.

As far as the eye can see, the villagers have erected grandiose monuments to the dead, pouring tens of thousands of dollars into elaborately mosaiced tombs. We meander along the quiet, sandy lanes amongst the raucously colorful mansions, and stumble upon a new one being built. Bankrolled by family in Chicago and Miami with a price tag rumored into the mid-six figures, it's definitely very exclusive. Everyone's dying to get in.



Lap An Lagoon

While the 250-hectare ghost city is impressive, I'm more interested in luxury for the living and continue down the coast to Angsana Lang Co, a gorgeous 222-room beach resort tucked away on its own little bay together with sister property, Banyan Tree Lang Co with its ritzy villas set on a hill, and the 18-hole, Nick Faldo-designed Laguna Golf Lang Co. The sea brought salvation to the fishermen of An Bang and I'm hoping it can do the same for me.

The next few days are spent decompressing, sleeping the sleep of the dead lulled by waves crashing onto the golden sand, indulging in a heavenly spa treatment, sipping cocktails by the massive freeform pool that snakes itself around the grounds or just lazing by the plunge pool of my room with a balcony overlooking the East Sea on one side and windows on the other with views out to the mountains.

Instead of my watch, I mark the time with the passing of the sun interspersed by hunger pangs waiting to be satiated. Mornings are spent at the Marketplace, leisurely nibbling away at a beautiful breakfast spread highlighted by too many kinds of freshly squeezed juices to count and heaping portions of smoked salmon and bagels with fresh cream cheese. Late lunches are taken at Moomba, gazing at the perfect crescent beach through floor-to-ceiling windows. I get my dose of Vitamin Sea with an appetizer of chargrilled salt and chili squid, the tender squid an ideal vehicle to carry the simple yet bold flavors, tempered by a mountain of fresh greens and a squeeze of lime that together tastes like the ocean. A main of sea bass in a sweet, thick, almost Thai-like peanut sauce follows, all washed down with a tropical orange-mango smoothie. Because calories on holiday don't count, I indulge in a ball of deep-fried vanilla ice cream, drizzled with caramel sauce and topped with slices of almond, a celebration to summer. Another night, it's dinner at Rice Bowl, a stylishly atmospheric space where tables are intimately sectioned off with what looks like giant wooden fish traps, a local design element that runs throughout the property. The food here is sophisticated Pan-Asian and I hop from a beautifully plated dragon maki to a meaty Korean galbi-gui yangnyeom, soy-marinated grilled beef ribs with kimchi.

I vow to work off the decadent meals with activities from the resort's densely-packed summer schedule, but ultimately end up eschewing archery, table tennis and water sports in favor of something more languid in my quest for rest. One morning is spent in the beautiful organic garden, getting my hands dirty in the shadow of the misty mountains behind us, planting herbs and plucking weeds to feed the menagerie of ducks, chickens and goats housed in a nearby pen. Another late afternoon is spent on an excursion to the Lap An Lagoon, known for farming juicy oysters just this side of the Hai Van Pass. A passing drizzle only adds drama to the clouds that hover over the mountain backdrop and clears the brackish air.



Rice Bowl at Angsana Lang Co



Seaview Junior Pool Suite (image by Angsana Lang Co)



Duc Duc, the home and surrounding grounds are a marriage of the spiritual and material. We enter under a tunnel of interlaced white apricot trees to find ourselves in front of a reflecting pool filled with coral-colored lilies. The original house is wooden, completely devoid of concrete or steel in its construction. There's no one about save for a caretaker and we walk around admiring the intricately carved joints and paneled doors that open up to allow the river breezes in. Strolling the grounds filled with fruit trees and flowering shrubs, it's not hard to imagine the restful home life of a court official from a bygone era.

I continue my peace-seeking mission back in Hue, at the aptly named "House of Peace". Of the many "garden houses" built along the banks of the Perfume River for royalty and mandarins, An Hien is the best preserved. Originally constructed in 1885 for one of the daughters of King

However, thanks to a serendipitous introduction, I find myself hearing first-hand what life in the royal court was like. At an embroidery shop downtown, I meet 90-year-old Mr. Le Van Kinh. Dressed in a crisply pressed pair of handsome pajamas, Mr. Kinh leads us to his upstairs study where he talks about being raised in the court by his grandfather, a high-ranking mandarin under King Khai Dinh. From the age of 4-10, Mr. Kinh's

life centered around learning royal embroidery and Chinese characters as well as watching his grandfather perform elaborate tea ceremonies every morning. He chuckles as he remembers going to school with the "not so clever" son of Bao Dai, the last emperor of the Nguyen dynasty, and becomes nostalgic as he shows us a copper pot used to hold burning embers for keeping water hot. His collection of artefacts from the palace includes a 500-year-old tea set and other priceless treasures. "Things were gentle and quiet in those days," he recalls amongst embroidered artwork showing scholars bent over calligraphy parchment and other memories of the palace.

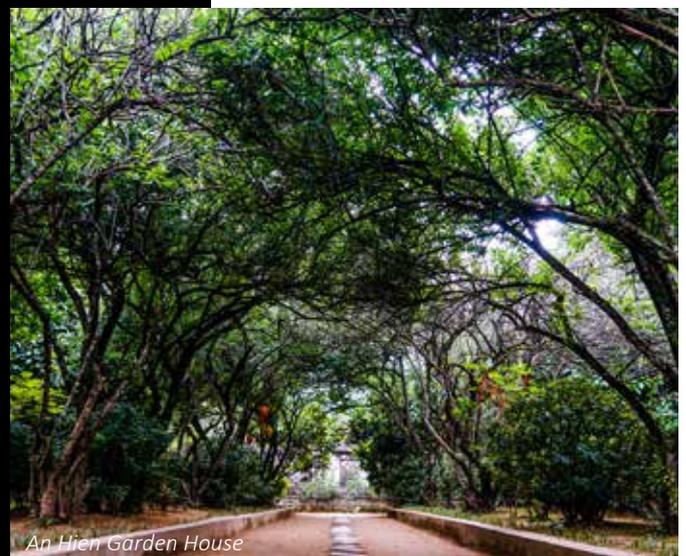
Even now, Hue's tranquility continues to inspire artists. In a studio behind his cafe in the Citadel, I meet up with visual artist Tran Tuan. Growing up in Hue, the site of fierce fighting during the war, Tuan has turned his unpleasant childhood memories into art. He's finishing up with what looks like kitchen utensils bizarrely attached to a finger, the last few pieces in his acclaimed series "Forefinger". Seeing my quizzical look, he explains: "The forefinger represents power. You can use it to command someone to do something. It's also



An Bang Ghost City



An Bang Ghost City



An Hien Garden House

the trigger finger. Some people of that generation chose to cut off the tip of their forefinger to avoid war. In times past, we were told that we were fighting for democracy or independence, but we really weren't. My series shows that the absence of the finger affirms the presence of the greater fight for peace."

Peaceful Hue "is a good place to create," he continues. "While we're far from the arts scene in Saigon and Hanoi, there's a rich cultural history. Life is simple here. You can work for a month and earn enough to pay your basic expenses for the whole year with time to read books, hang out with other artists and think. The slow pace of life is good for artists."

While Hue's unchanging nature might be good for artists, it's been seen as bad for business. Ever since the Complex of Hue Monuments was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993, few attractions have been added to keep tourists around. One exception was the ill-fated Ho Thuy Tien Water Park. Opened in 2004, the USD 3 million park with waterslides and an aquarium was a hit with the locals. "We finally had somewhere to hang out," remembers Lan. "Our whole class would go camping there on holidays." But the park was never completed and was plagued with problems. "There wasn't enough to do and lake was just too big. There were no lifeguards and every year, some kid would fall in the water and drown." Abandoned after just a few years, the park now sits empty. We find a way by the guards, and wander around the post-apocalyptic grounds in an eerie yet peaceful silence. Seeing the man-made structures slowly being reclaimed by the forest after almost a decade, I'm reminded of the First Law of Motion which dictates that a body at rest is destined to remain at rest.



On the grounds of the Gia Long Tomb



Khai Dinh Tomb



Tran Tuan



Le Van Kinh



Thuy Tien Water Park

IF YOU GO...

Alba Wellness Resort (www.albawellness.com) is comprised of 56 rooms and bungalows surrounded by tropical forests, lakes, gardens and tranquil bamboo paths. Rooms start at USD 225 and bungalows start at USD 350, including breakfast and access to the hot springs and indoor/outdoor onsen.

With the Truong Son mountain range on one side and the sea on the other, Angsana Lang Co (www.angsana.com) is the ideal summer destination one hour from Hue or Danang. Select from 222 rooms and suites, with doubles starting at USD 184, including breakfast, daily activities and non-motorized water sports.

I visited the An Bang Ghost City with a guide from Khiri Travel (www.khiri.com). Khiri offers intimate, personalized travel experiences in Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) and caters to any

desire at any budget.

I visited several garden houses with Trails of Indochina (www.trailsofindochina.com) including An Hien, the garden house of Princess Ngoc Son and a recreated garden house, some of which offer home-hosted lunches on-site. Trails of Indochina organizes set and bespoke itineraries in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Visit Mr. Kinh's embroidery gallery Duc Thanh at 82 Phan Dang Luu. If he takes a shine to you, he just might invite you upstairs for tea. Have a coffee at Then Cafe (63 Le Trung Dinh), owned by artist Tran Tuan. The cozy cafe doubles as a gallery and co-working space for local artists.

The Ho Thuy Tien Water Park is on the way to the Tomb of Khai Dinh. You can find the lake on Google Maps. Turn off at the sign for "Nha Hang Sinh Thai" to approach the park from the back, with closer access to the amphitheater and the waterslides.



Indoor onsen (image by Alba Wellness Resort)

Continuing in my own search for rest, I head 30 kms north to Hue's newest attraction, the luxe Alba Wellness Resort built around natural hot springs at the foot of the Truong Son mountain range. Espousing a holistic wellness approach, one of the co-owners likens a stay to shutting down and rebooting. It's an apt analogy and I start thinking how amazing it would be to defrag my own life, stopping even if for a little while the endless spinning of my mind, taking all the bits of my life which seem out of place, and putting them back in some kind of order.

To that end, I settle into a surprisingly easy routine of healthy living, riding a bicycle from my ginormous bungalow done up in chic stone and bamboo all around the spacious grounds, past lotus ponds, Japanese bridges and gurgling water features. Meals feature healthy, sophisticated versions of Vietnamese and international favorites, including a plethora of fruit and nuts and a delicious brown rice congee at the huge buffet breakfast. Multi-course set meals recall wholesome versions of the fussy cuisine of the Hue lords with dishes like grilled Australian beef, sea bass ceviche, homemade spicy tomato soup and beet tops with mam ruoc dipping sauce, a Hue specialty made of fermented fish featuring lovely umami flavors rarely seen even in Saigon.

I spend mornings being active—ziplining over the forest on Vietnam's longest free-hanging continuous zipline, swimming in the pool or touring the

resort's own organic garden in the mountains where ducks are raised for eggs, stalks of lemongrass get trimmed into straws and deer and wild boar supply natural fertilizer for the impressive array of vegetables.

Afternoons, however, are pure bliss—soaking in rock pools of varying temperatures fed by the hot springs, getting a massage or luxuriating in the onsen, a 7-step process involving indoor pools filled with mineral water, steam and sauna followed by a cold plunge and a scenic, private outdoor hot spring.

By the end, I become Newton's First Law. I am finally a body at rest. ■



Hot springs (image by Alba Wellness Resort)



Pleasures of Penang

Text by Emily Murray-Kauffeldt

An island of rich Chinese heritage, Penang has an array of temples, ruins, food, art and beautiful beaches that make a trip here more than worthwhile

I WILL BE HONEST, WE HADN'T planned to visit Penang because we had been told “it’s really busy” and “it’s full our tourists,” but we were flying from Malaysia to Bangkok and thought “why not.” I am so glad we did!

As soon as we checked into our Heritage Homestay, we were given a Heritage Trail map of the city and it crossed our minds that Penang could be a cool place to hang out—we weren’t wrong.

Penang quickly became a place we fell in love with, which is unusual because we don’t really like cities. So, what was it about Penang that made it so different?

Penang is a melting pot of cultures.

The Malaysian marketing song boasts “Malaysia, truly Asia,” and nowhere has this been more evident than in Penang. A fusion of Malaysian, Chinese, Indian, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu—these are all clearly visible in Penang’s districts, architecture and cuisine.

To explain how multi-cultural George Town is, we visited a Buddhist temple, Hindu temple and mosque all within a five-minute walk of each another.

Goddess of Mercy Buddhist Temple

The oldest and most legendary temple in Penang is still an active temple, and every year believers of the Taoism and Confucianism teachings will swarm the temple on the eve of Lunar New Year. They will pray to the Goddess Kuan Yin that their health and good luck will be granted to them in the New Year. There are a few stands outside selling joss sticks and we found a quaint courtyard out the back where we sat in the shade for five minutes for some respite from the heat of the day (and for some peace and quiet).

Sri Mariamman Hindu Temple

There was no mistaking when we entered Little India, it was an assault on the senses. Locals wore saris and many shops had them for sale displaying their rich colors on mannequins. The smell of the food was so rich you could almost taste it and you could definitely hear Little India, as each stall owner blared out Bhangra and Bollywood music, each

seemingly competing with the other for the loudest.

Built in 1833, Sri Mariamman is the oldest Hindu temple in Penang dedicated to the Hindu God Lord Subramaniam and is a kaleidoscope of bright, beautiful colors.

Kapitan Keling Mosque - Named after Caudeer Mohuddeen who built this mosque in 1800, it is the largest and most historic mosque in George Town. The word “Kapitan keling” means “leader of a South Indian Muslim community.”

Delicious Street Food

With an eclectic mix of cultures, you will find culinary delights to suit most palettes. Street food is very popular in Penang and there are stalls and communal areas in the various districts of George Town. During our Street Art Trail, we stumbled across Lebuhr Kimberley in Chinatown, which had a local Chinese food court serving cheap and delicious food, we ate here twice and ordered *char koay teow* on both occasions.

If you want to combine a traditional Malaysian food court with a sunset spot, head to Padang Kota food court at Esplanade which will tick both boxes. When we ate here, we found there were many stalls to choose from but, unfortunately, it was a cloudy, blustery

afternoon so I cannot comment on the sunset. Hope you have better luck.

Street Art And Sculptures

Anyone who has heard of Penang will know about its infamous murals, in fact some people visit George Town for this reason only. George Town is actually a UNESCO World Heritage Site, however, it isn’t because of the street art, but the wrought-iron structures dotted around key historic parts of the town. In 2009, the Penang state government had a brilliant initiative of opening up a competition to achieve its UNESCO status and the winning idea resulted in the creation of 51 steel rod caricatures retelling the history of George Town. I have to admit, it’s inspirational and if a city has a story to tell, this is a fantastic and quirky way of giving tourists a history lesson. I would recommend it to

everyone because it’s a fun and unique way of navigating



Kek Lok Si Temple



I'm not so sure. Maybe it's because we weren't blessed with nice weather (it rained and was cloudy), and although the view was lovely, I am unsure whether the trip and queuing was worth it.

We queued for around 20 minutes to catch the rather steep 785-meter funicular to the top, the journey took around 10 minutes but we were unable to appreciate any views as we were jammed in like sardines. Beware; during high season, you could be queuing for a lot longer.

As I mentioned, it was raining when we arrived so we thought we would visit the small Hindu temple at the top to shelter for a while, which was a welcoming respite from the rain.

There was a small mosque a few meters away and, as we had never had the opportunity to visit the inside of one until now, we thought we would have a quick nose. It wasn't a huge elaborate mosque, inside was a simple room divided by a curtain; one side was for females to pray and the other side for males.

By now it was lunchtime and, as it was still raining, we popped to the on-site food court and ate a cheap *char koay teow*. This food court is full of cheap-eat stalls to choose from and, again, was a good enough place to shelter from the rain.

around the back streets and discovering the main areas without really trying. It's easy to spot some of the more famous pieces—you will see queues of people lining up to take photographs.

We stayed in a traditional Chinese clan house called Muntri House, a Heritage Homestay on Muntri Street, which (in my opinion) is a really cool part of George Town and is central to the popular tourist streets of Love Lane and Chulia Street. This area has some of the most photographed pieces of steel-rod caricature sculptures and murals—at the top of the road is Jimmy Choo and at the bottom, the Kung-Fu Girl Street Art. Quirky cafés line Muntri Street, for example we sipped a mango lassi on a converted antique sewing machine.

coffees in the world but, unfortunately, this has given way to intensive farming methods where civet cats are kept in battery cages and force-fed the cherries. On second thoughts, if you are a cat lover, maybe it's best to skip this.

Penang Hill

They say you haven't been to Penang unless you have visited Penang Hill, but

Puurfect Cat Café

Across the road from our homestay on Muntri Lane was a delightful cat café, and if you know me, you know I am rather partial to them. We spent a wonderful couple of hours there, drinking green tea, eating delicious homemade cake, and petting the sweetest kitties. When we used to have our cat Ella, these are the playful antics she used to do so to have a few cats running around doing the same was delightful.

When the cat treats came out, well that was it, all cats were your friends... until someone else chinked a cat bowl with their treats, and then they were gone. There was Orange the ginger Persian, Bear the smoky gray Scottish Fold and the stocky white Scottish Fold named Teddy. Molly was the mother of the three tabbies who continuously played with anything and everything they could find.

If you love cats, you can always take it to the next level by drinking their poop in a cup of Kopi Luwak. This is an Indonesian coffee that is made from the partially digested and defecated coffee cherries of the Asian Palm Civet cat. Delicious. It's considered to be one of the most expensive



Then finally, the rain stopped!

Quickly, we made our way to the viewing platform, and the mist was starting to clear providing some lovely views of the city, the bridge connecting Penang Island to the mainland and of Kek Lok Si Buddhist Temple down the hill.

I have been told that there was a botanical garden about a 20-minute walk away, alternatively you can take a golf buggy, but alas, the rain starting to come again. I was later advised to visit around 5pm so you can walk around and be there for sunset and I have to admit, the photos I have seen online do look amazing so if you want to go to Penang Hill, maybe you will remember this.

Kek Lok Si Temple

If you like Buddhist temples, then do check out Kek Lok Si Temple, Malaysia's largest Buddhist temple and an important place of pilgrimage for Buddhists from Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines. It is spectacular and well worth a few hours exploring, for a full day out, you can combine this temple with a trip to Penang Hill (maybe for sunset).

Kek Lok Si is like a Russian doll with many different layers and just when you think you have finished with one room, another will follow



displaying more amazing statues, carvings and gold—there are a lot of gold Buddhas. If, like us, you wanted to buy a wishing ribbon to hang on the wishing tree, there are plenty of places to choose from. Wishes range from good health to successful career, and we purchased one each (but I'm not confessing what we wished for otherwise it may not come true!).

We took the inclined lift to Kuan Yin, the 36.5m-high bronze Goddess of Mercy statue, which also has a beautiful view of the city. This area is definitely the busiest part of the temple and there is a lovely pagoda and pond to sit near for a bit of peace and tranquility.

Beaches In The North

If there is a beach to be found, I will seek it out and Penang is no different. Around 17km away from George Town in the north of the island is Batu Ferringhi. There are plenty of water activities to be enjoyed, such as paragliding, jet skiing and banana boat rides. Alternatively, you can lie on the soft sand and simply relax.

Nightlife

We love a bit of reggae, so when we stumbled across a street bar called The Reggae Club on Chulia Street about 5 minutes from our homestay, we knew

this was the place for us. There was a magnetic chess board on our table so we thought "why not," it didn't matter that we had never played one another in all the years we had been together, tonight was the night we were going to test our memory. (We haven't played it since.)

We visited The Reggae Club twice; one night we played chess and ate dinner, another night we ended up smoking a shisha with some cool people that we enticed in from the street with the promise of free drinks for ladies, then headed to a street corner where the local people hang out for cheap drinks. It's funny how an ordinary evening of just two can turn into a funny drunken event with a group of strangers. (I guess that's what free drinks will do for you!)

We really enjoyed our time in Penang and in particular, the Heritage Trail as it was just so different to anywhere we have visited. It gave us a wonderful perspective on the city and we explored places in a way we wouldn't usually consider, but more than that, it was fun. The melting pot of people in Penang is unique and the quirkiness of some of the areas meant we fell in love with this city. If you are thinking of going to Malaysia, add Penang to your list, we are certainly glad we did. ■



>> The List Business

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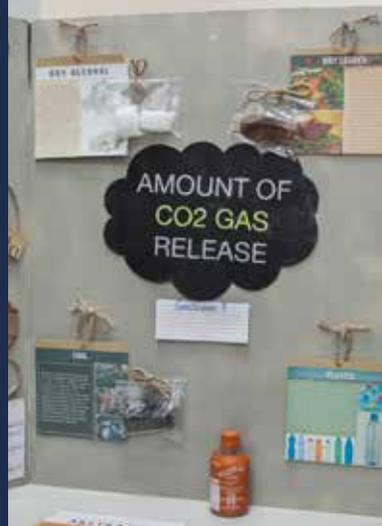
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Kids & Education





A Science Fair at ISHCMC American Academy

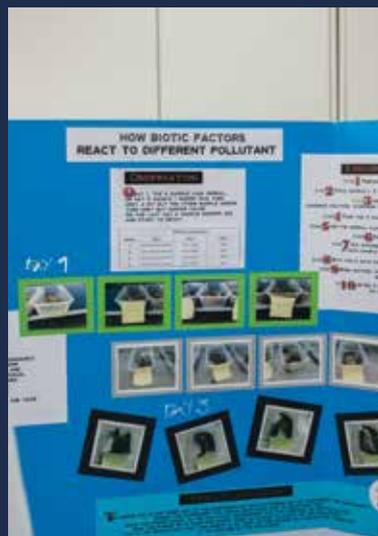
Images by Vy Lam

SCIENCE IS A HANDS-ON, experimental and theoretical body of knowledge that is better learned when students have the opportunity to do rather than repeating science. Our school science projects are based on unique student-generated scientific questions about the marvels of nature and the innate curiosity of their young minds. The inquiry process is guided by our highly-qualified science teachers in order to foster critical and reflective thinking where students have to think outside the box and come up with solutions to problems they never thought existed before.

Creativity and innovation go hand-in-hand; in some cases resulting in ideas that could be further developed or amplified for the benefit and evolution of our society. Projects like the manufacture of organic cosmetic

products, studies about the relationships between the color of light or music and the growth of plants, causes and possible solutions to floods in Vietnam, determination of the best masks for pollution protection, and questions like— Why sorting out garbage correctly is important for the air condition and your health?—indicate the commitment of our students with our environment and society, and constitute themselves as driving forces for positive changes in our lives.

Our science fair is not a show-and-tell event anymore; it is an incubating scenario for some potential scientists and socio-cultural transformers in a society that requires immediate actions. Our students will be a significant part of the ones that make a difference! — *Dr. Alex Aristizabal*



How do different mixtures of matches affect the distance of a projectile traveling out of a homemade tank? Room: 300



Why did you choose this topic and how did you settle on your approach to the problem?

The reason why we wanted to make the tank and firecracker experiment was because we wanted to know more about the chemistry, that meant we researched more about the chemical compound in matches, such as Red Phosphorus (P); $KClO_3$ (Potassium Chlorate) and the characteristics of working with matches too. We watched some videos about matches and tanks and then we started to make them.

What was the most surprising challenge you faced during this science project? How did you overcome it?

The most challenging part was making a successful firecracker (a firecracker that can travel) because we spent lots of time in the making of the firecracker and most of them failed. So, we overcame this problem by being more dedicated and collaborative between the members in the group. We also learned from our failed experiences so we needed other people to help, too.

Describe the materials you used and where did you get them?

There are many things that we needed in this experiment, such as 30 boxes of matches with approximately 1,200 matches, which we bought from the market. At home, we had a box of cardboard and some scissors, too. We also had glue guns, rulers and one roll of aluminum foil from the supermarket.

What were your parents' reactions when you told them you wanted to make a tank for your science project?

Our parents were very interested and excited when we had the idea to make the tank and the firecracker. Our parents actually agreed with our idea

immediately and were ready to help when we needed them. Especially, my father [Khai's], who loves chemistry and history, he always helped me and went

around the city with me to buy many materials. My partners' parents were also very interested and helped us in many things, too.

The great thing about working together is the synergy between people. What would you say was the most important skill or idea each of you had during the course of this science project?

I can say that our team members worked quite well because each person did their own work and had responsibilities. We researched our topic well and prepared a lot for the presentation before science fair day. That is the biggest accomplishment that we had.

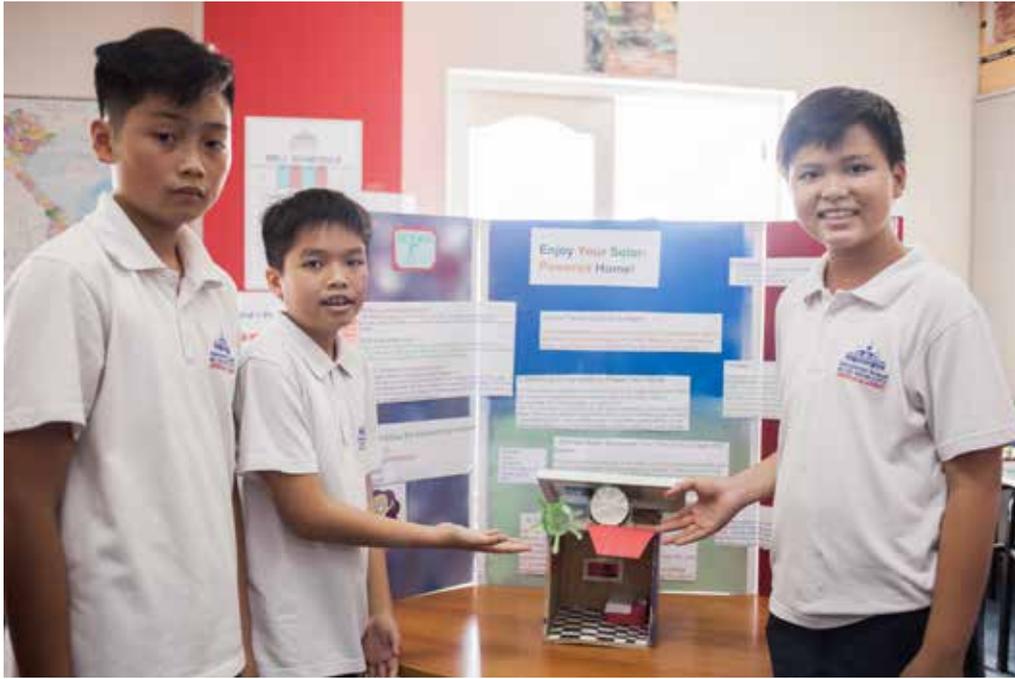
If you had to do it all over again, is there anything you would do differently?

We would mention the tank more, like make the engine of the tank the same as the videos on YouTube, which will make people who see the tank more interested and attracted to it. We will also be more meticulous with the small parts, too.



Grade 7: 7-2 John.L, John.T, Alex

How to make housing eco-friendly? Room: 302



Why did you decide on this topic as your science project?

We did this science fair project because people are using too many non-renewable resources and one day all non-renewable resources will run out. So we wanted to find another way to have energy when non-renewable resources run out. We came up with the idea of using renewable resources because it can never run out.

What does the term "eco-friendly" mean to you?

Eco-friendly is protecting the environment and not hurting it.

How did you find ways to make housing eco-friendly?

We found a way by connecting renewable resources to a house to make it eco-friendly. We used solar panels and connected it into a house: All the materials we used to make the model were all eco-friendly.

How did you go about researching and gathering information to support your project?

It helped us understand how solar panels worked and what they need to work.

What has this science project taught you about teamwork?

It taught us that working in a group can be faster than if you worked alone.

What would you do differently next time?

I will try to use more renewable resources next time to further expand my knowledge of renewable resources and help the world understand it's very important to use renewable resources. ■





Carlos Diaz is the Library Teacher & Manager at The American School.

Screen Time

The double-edged sword of allowing kids to play video games

YOU KNOW THEM.

You've played them. Today video games seem to be everywhere. Even an innocuous travel application like TripAdvisor has gamified elements that allow you to use it better and urge you to use it more. Marketing companies know very well that we like games. More and more they have been using game elements to hook us to their campaigns and make us fall in love with products and ideas. Even revolutionary educators are taking note of this and are using gamification in classrooms, recognizing that games can cause a very special form of engagement that traditional education may not, acknowledging that games sometimes teach and that many times we do learn through games.

Video game companies, developers and makers use this knowledge to create more accessible games. In the past, gaming and video gaming was associated with a specific stereotype: The good-for-nothing male slacker and the geek. Now, girls of all ages and shapes have access to games coexisting with a wide variety of types of gamers: the casual, the hard-core, and others; that vary depending on the time, skill and dedication they dedicate to their games. There's even a breakthrough as a possible career of Professional E-Sport Gamer: very talented teams of players of certain competitive games like Overwatch, League of Legends and DOTA that get sponsored for their playing in national and international matches and leagues.

Amazing, huh? The penetration of video games in modern society is total; and everyone with a handheld screen can be a gamer. That's why it comes as no surprise that your kid is so hooked to gaming: everybody is.

The Good News

This is not necessarily bad. There are thousands of examples of good video games with many good purposes: games that teaches us, games that let us experience realities that wouldn't be possible otherwise. Games can be

great teachers and beautiful works of art. Associations like Games for Change (www.gamesforchange.org) are working together with all kinds of developers to get great games together and advocate for the value of gaming. Even big companies like Nintendo are now creating wonderful examples of hands-on games that develop alternative ways of learning coding, engineering and art with their Nintendo Labo. Games also pave the way for social interaction with interactive multiplayer experiences that boost cooperation and creativity. A great example of this would be Minecraft, although there are thousands and thousands of other examples that may be checked through the shared website. So, no: gaming is not bad, and it won't make anybody less intelligent. On the contrary: good games make you smarter!

The Bad News

Video games can be bad. In the same way as eating too much fat or too much sugar can be bad. In the same way as eating a pizza for every meal can be very bad for you. Some games can be inappropriate for your kids' age and maturity, some others can have predatory business practice that aim to hook the player into addiction and a never ending useless spending of money. And more importantly, all games are screen time and it's been proven that too much screen time in a developing brain can be extremely harmful.

When unchecked, kids can end up playing games that are completely inappropriate for their age. As a teacher and a librarian, I have many times encountered kids playing games like Player Unknown Battle Ground, or Grand Theft Auto, both known for their gratuitous violence display. Kids also end up having access to free-to-play software like Roblox in which they have social interaction with other players but have the option of paying real money for customization items for the game that have no in-game real reward. Lately some companies have been extending the use of these predatory practices in

their games, introducing Loot Boxes (gamble machines with real money for in-game content) that are necessary for the game's progression, targeting a very dangerous addiction to very young, unaware minds. Examples of this can be found in EA games, especially in the latest Star Wars Battlefront, even financially sanctioned in some countries for their gambling practices.

The Better News

You can be the difference between good games and bad games for your kids. You are the key element. Your interaction with your kids will determine what they play. Get to know them. Get to know what they play and even try to play what they play! Getting involved in your kids' gaming will be the most powerful control you can have over what they consume.

Fortunately, you are not alone in this task. The Entertainment Software Rating Board is constantly on the look for new games and rates them according to their content and use. Check their website for more information www.esrb.org. They will have all kinds of tools to help you understand what you can do to help your kid choose games that will boost their passion for learning and life. Also check Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org), a website dedicated to check all kinds of media and give you information about their content. In a nutshell, they recommend:

- Avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting for children younger than 18 months.
- If you choose to introduce media to children 18-24 months, find high-quality programming and co-view and co-play.
- Limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs for children age 2 to 5 years.
- Create a family media plan with consistent rules and enforce them for older kids.

I dare to add: play with your kid and always get in the know of what they are playing and consuming. ■

SPECIAL NEEDS

Identifying if a pupil is SEN or EAL when learning another language



“WHEN WE LEARN TO SPEAK a different language, we learn to see a bigger world.” These days, this simple statement in its context premise probably would not find many opponents. With so many language centers and international schools around the city, learning a foreign language has long ago stopped being an afterschool hobby. It’s a norm. An expectation.

Nevertheless, just because it’s a norm it doesn’t mean that its progression looks the same in every learner. Language acquisition is a complex, lengthy, yet a sequential learning process. We cannot rush it, and neither can we jump over some of its hoops to speed it up.

How does it work? There is an ample amount of research on language acquisition. The topic seems to be extensively examined, analyzed and discussed that if it is not yet boring it definitely might seem like its time for being a nouveau are long over. What made me think, however, about all the boring data that researchers continuously debate over are the teachers’ and parents’ concerns when their child or a student is not learning fast enough. “Something is wrong. It’s Special

NAMASTE
RA JAMBO SALAM
UR ANYOUNG HASEYO
HELLO GUTEN TAG
SALVE KONNICHIWA
OLA NǏ HǎO

Educational Needs (SEN).” It is a phrase that, worryingly, is frequently used to describe academic performance of English—or any other language—learners when they are not learning fast enough.

The complexity of differing between Special Educational Needs and Foreign Language Acquisition has become so prevalent that it triggered quite a number of new, yet worthwhile, researches creating a spectrum of indicators for both.

Language acquisition in a fully immersed school environment takes time. Yes, this time is strongly dependent on a child’s resilience, home environment, previous education, level of home language and intellectual abilities. However, it rarely ever takes shorter than 5-10 years. Although so-called “survival language” develops quite quickly, because of its simple vocabulary and structures, it takes an extended period of time to build academic fluency. Intellectual needs of a learner and the content imposed by their environment and school make the learning more challenging, hence the older the child the more complex and demanding the learning gets. And by all means, it’s not because of their age, but because of the complexity of their milieu and greater need to understand them. Knowing this correlation is crucial, as it may prevent many educators and parents from prematurely labeling a child SEN.

Special Educational Needs do not

reveal themselves in learning a second language. Indicators of those would manifest much earlier. Determining whether there is a case for SEN support requires a collaborative approach. A close observation, continued communication with family and teachers might be great sources for confronting the fears and suspicion.

I believe it is also crucial to bear in mind that outside of their academic talents, students’ learning patterns can be influenced by a number of factors: uninterrupted family life, schedules not filled up to the rim with afterschool activities and up-keeping with learning a home language.

It is right that delays in learning a foreign language cannot be ignored, however, they also cannot be immediately wrongly labeled. The signs of not speaking, not participating in lessons, not responding to questions most of the time are the expected, natural signs of the first stages of language acquisition, not special needs. Even if it takes longer than the mainstream literature indicates.

Children who are learning an additional language slower than others need to be supported, but that might only mean that they require a bit more time to complete a task, they need help by translating the expectations and instructions, or maybe just being spoken slower to. Yes, there are cases when Language Learners exhibit SEN

needs, and because in this part of the world the topic of Special Educational Needs is still fresh, it is essential that parents are educated and understand the implications. Much seen denial makes all parties’ work more difficult and certainly does not serve the child any good. With that said, SEN is not a disease. It can be well helped, and with appropriate and timely support can, in many cases, be minimized.

And what about the “not fast enough” Language Learners? Well, SEN or not, language in a child’s capacity will come anyway. Solid support, knowledge and realistic expectations can only make it better. ■



Dorota Koziel is an English as an Additional Language teacher with a B.A (Hons) Teaching English as a Foreign Language and an M.A School Counseling and Education at the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP).

I Love You, I Hate You

Young people don't love their devices as much as we think they do. In fact, they want our help disconnecting from them

Text by **Donna Freitas**

WHEN I WAS INTERVIEWING

college students about technology, one young woman told me how—after getting mugged for her smartphone on a Chicago bus—she chased her muggers off the bus and down the street, then offered them USD150 in exchange for returning her phone. They gave it back.

Afterward, the police told her it was a dangerous thing to have done. When I agreed and asked what made her so desperate, she explained that, at the time, “my smartphone was worth more than my life.”

People often assume that young people's lives revolve around their smartphones, that these devices are the objects of their obsession and love. We joke that smartphones are attached to teenagers like any another essential appendage.

I assumed this would be the case, too, when I set out to do my research. I spent two years interviewing nearly 200 students and surveying an additional 900 across 13 colleges and universities all over the US, asking them about social media and smartphones. I wanted to know how new technologies were influencing young adults' identity, their relationships, their personal well-being, as well as their sense of place in the world and communities (or lack thereof).

I found something surprising: While students may love their devices, there was also more than a good deal of hate toward them, *a lot* of complication, and a massive effort on their parts to control—and curb—their usage of their smartphones (which are basically social media delivery devices). Unless we make an effort to understand how young adults relate to their smartphones, we'll just keep joking and stereotyping—and that isn't helping. There are better ways to support young people as they valiantly strive for a healthier relationship with

technology.

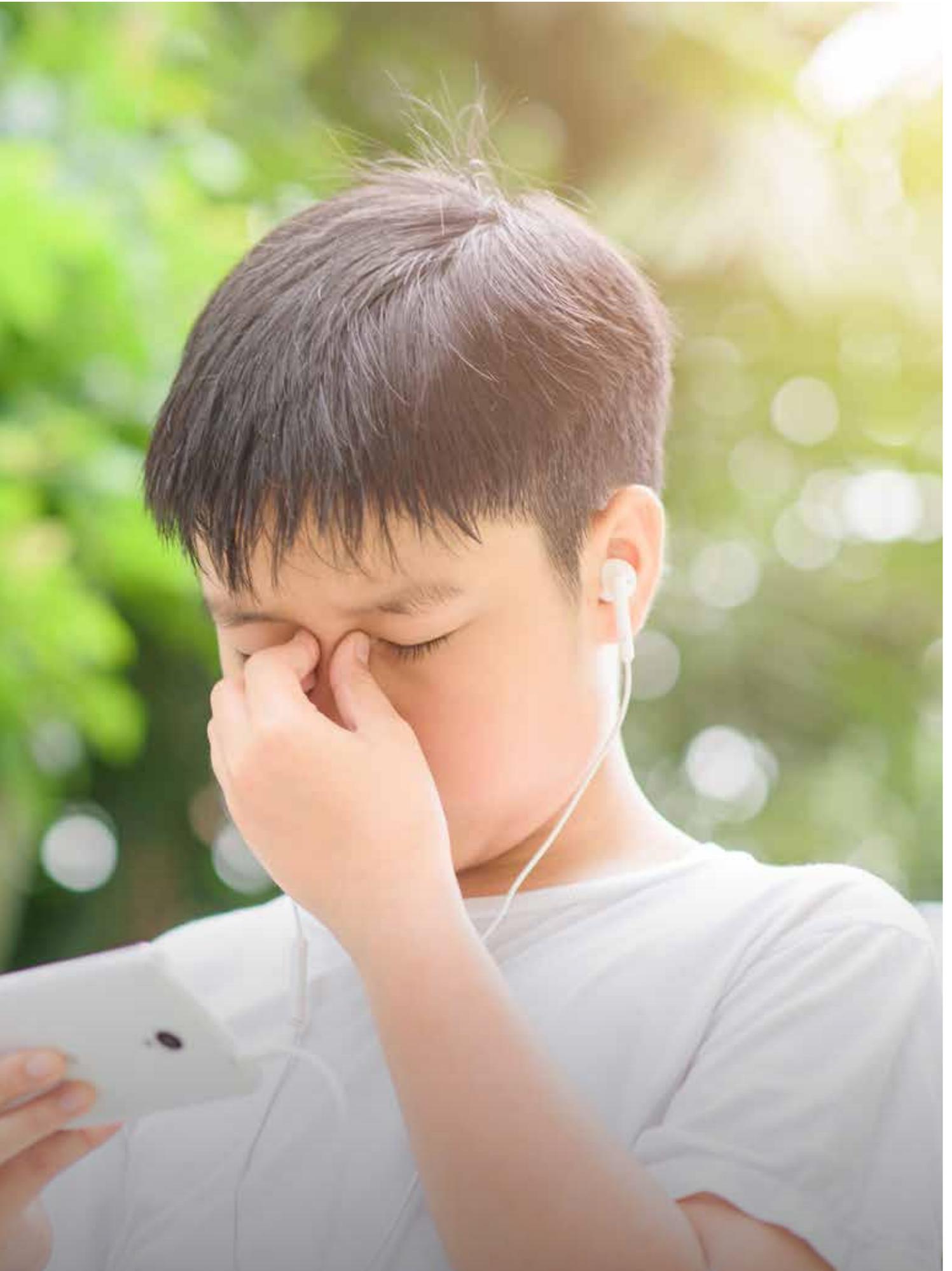
Young adults have a hard time imagining life apart from those pretty, slender objects with their easily shattered screens. Smartphones help them do everything from navigating unfamiliar streets to deciding where to go out at night to staying in constant touch with their loved ones (and not-so-loved ones) and the world.

A young woman I met had even named her phone Meg, and talked about Meg throughout our conversation as though Meg were a person in her life with whom she was very intimate. Another young man I interviewed told me that leaving the house without his smartphone was like going out without his heart or his brain, then laughed at himself for how melodramatic that sounded.

But the other half of the picture is this: College students are doing their best to try and live without their smartphones, too, at least for brief spells in their daily and weekly lives.

Most students were intentional—or tried as best as they could to be—with limiting their usage, taking daylong and even months-long sabbaticals from their devices (or certain social media platforms). They came up with all sorts of rituals to help in this endeavor.

There were students who left their smartphone outside of the interview room because they didn't want to be tempted to reach for it during our conversation. Other students left the house in the morning and didn't bring their charger—they'd made a deal with themselves that once the battery died, they wouldn't use it





for the rest of the day. I even met a young woman who told me the reason she liked going to church was because it was the one phone-free hour of her week.

Students spoke of how they regularly handed over their smartphones to a roommate or friend, with express instructions not to hand it back until they'd finished the lab or paper due the next day. And it was fairly universal, too, for people to leave phones in purses or in an unreachable pile when they went out to dinner with friends.

Like just about everyone else I know, the students found it extremely difficult to resist grabbing for their phones—it was akin to resisting chocolate or potato chips when you're surrounded by bowls full of such goodies. But try and try they did. When they inevitably failed, or fell short of their promises and expectations, they'd just try again, inventing new methods of resistance in the process.

It's also true that the college students I spoke with couldn't imagine giving their smartphones up entirely or permanently. *How would people find their way around without GPS? What if there was an emergency? How would their parents reach them ten times a day if they didn't have their phones on them constantly? How would they possibly take pictures?* (A few did fantasize about this scenario, though: One young man told me he couldn't wait until he was old and past working age so he could "retire" from having a smartphone.)

Clearly, young adults don't have a blissfully happy attachment to their smartphones. Even though it frustrates and even embarrasses some of them to admit this, many long for our permission and help to unplug when they can't do it on their own. Rather than judging, here are a few ways we can become young people's allies in their technological struggles.

Take It Away, Parents And Teachers

Most of us need help putting our phone down. As in, we need someone to physically remove it from our person and not give us any choice in the matter.

More than a few interviewees commented on how much they appreciated it when their parents took their smartphones away for a family trip or even during the night at home.

Well, they *eventually* appreciated this gesture. Most of these same students also spoke of how the first few days of separation were unbelievably painful.

They often experienced terrible

withdrawal and felt like addicts—yet then started feeling peaceful, blissful, and connected to others in ways they hadn't in years. They were grateful for the break, and many talked of how much they dreaded going back to their phone afterward.

Even though kids might initially seem annoyed, resistant, or even full of rage if you take the smartphone away or establish boundaries about usage, secretly they might be grateful to you for this effort. I suspect that most will *eventually* feel gratitude if you dissolve this attachment for a bit, or at least help to loosen it.

Another easy (and totally free) way that parents, schools, campuses and wider communities can help kids is to offer wifi-free space, in addition to all the wifi-connected spaces. Everyone I met on every campus could tell me where to find the wifi-free spaces—as in, the places, nooks, and crannies where the wifi on campus failed by accident. They went to those places to study, and many students wished for similar wifi-free spaces for socializing, too.

Why not remove wifi from a designated space or floor of a library, one cafeteria or lounge on a big campus, one particular room in the house, or one or two (or more) classrooms in a school building? This offers children and young adults a diversity of living, learning, and socializing opportunities—some plugged in, and some unplugged.

We all could use a little help like this from our friends, teachers, parents, and communities in navigating toward a healthier relationship with our devices.

More Self - Compassion, Less Judgment

The reason we need help is because it is incredibly difficult to put smartphones down. Smartphones and social media are designed to make us want to use them more, not less.

"[Product designers] play your psychological vulnerabilities (consciously and unconsciously) against you in the race to grab your attention," says Tristan Harris, a former Google "design ethicist," who has identified ten ways that technology hijacks your mind. This does not bode well for those of us making efforts at curbing usage.

My interviewees resented feeling unhealthy about their phones, and were ashamed they did not have more willpower around them. Their smartphones may indeed be akin to bowls of gooey chocolate constantly within arms' reach, yet they still expect to have a perfect ability to resist whenever they want to—to never cheat on the smartphone diets they've set up for themselves, however unrealistic these expectations may be.

We need to be much less hard on ourselves. It's okay to admit that we are struggling—and failing—at achieving a level of usage that feels healthy. We need to ask for help from the people around us, and not be embarrassed to admit that we need it.

So, more self-compassion, less judgment. That should be our new mantra when it comes to our phones.

Knowledge - And Conversation - Is Power

Given how addictive technology can be, even better than just taking the smartphone away from your kids would be to also establish a dialogue within families and classrooms about everybody's usage.

We need to talk about social media and smartphones—and I mean do some critical thinking about these things, their design, the intentions of their designers, the companies that run them, and how they are changing our world, our lives, our relationships, our personal and social well-being, and our identities both for good and for ill.

What *is* a healthy level of usage, anyway? Is it different for every person? How do we even know? Can some people never achieve a healthy balance? (I've seen college students pose this question themselves.) How are our devices both facilitating and interrupting our abilities to connect and converse with each other? Are some new technologies and ways of using them more ethical? These are good questions that we need to think about and discuss.

Constant smartphone use is not only an issue for young adults. Just about everyone (even you who are reading this) tends to have their phone at the ready at all times of day. Maintaining an ongoing open and critical conversation about how we feel about our devices and how we use them not only empowers our children around new technology, but us, as well.

One young woman I interviewed took a lengthy sabbatical—nearly a year off—from all social media. Before, she said, she'd begun to "feel used" by social media. This bothered her greatly, she told me, because we are supposed to be the users of platforms like Facebook and not the other way around.

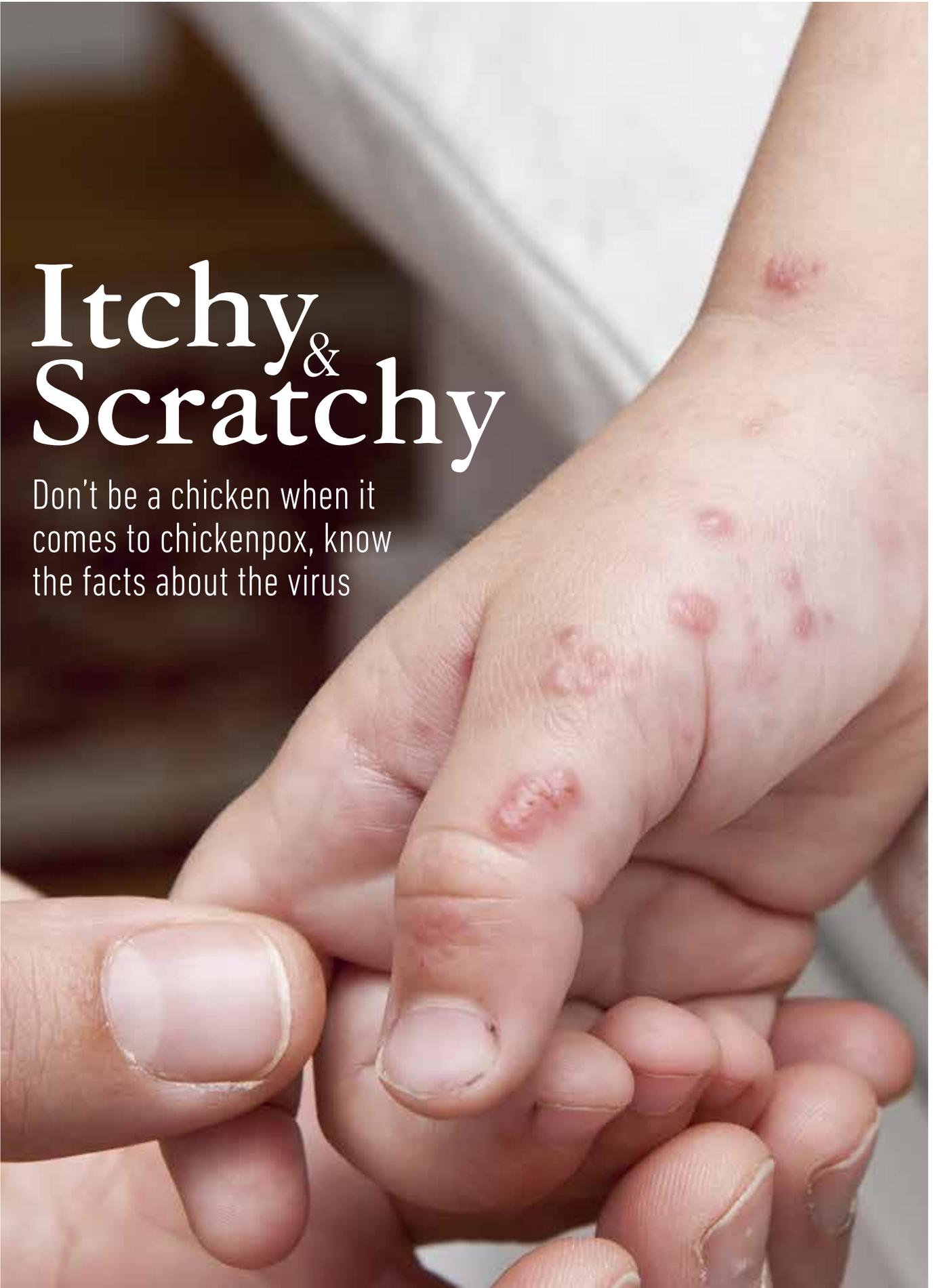
So she'd made a promise to herself: She wouldn't rejoin Facebook or download any other social media app until she felt she was capable of soundly and squarely remaining in the position of *user*—until she was strong enough not to allow it to control *her*. Shortly before our interview, she'd reached that goal.

This young woman made a seemingly simple yet wildly significant distinction between *using* and feeling *used* or *being used*. It is a distinction that so many students danced around in our conversations, and one that can help all of us better navigate social media and smartphones, in an effort to develop a healthier relationship with them: Are we using *them*—or are they using *us*? ■

Donna Freitas, Ph.D., lectures at universities across the US on her work about college students. Her latest book, The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost (Oxford, 2017), is based on research from her new study about social media and how it is affecting the ways we construct identity, make meaning in the world and navigate relationships during college.

Itchy & Scratchy

Don't be a chicken when it comes to chickenpox, know the facts about the virus



LIKE ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE world, children living in Ho Chi Minh City will presumably come into contact with the chickenpox (or “varicella zoster”) virus at some point in their early lives. In most children, the symptoms are mild and temporary; in some cases the complications can be quite dangerous, such as pneumonia, encephalitis, and liver inflammation. While those complications are rare, it is very important to vaccinate children against chickenpox before they come into contact with it to give them the best possible protection and avoid these dangers.

This is a topical issue, because we are currently experiencing a chickenpox epidemic in Vietnam. In many countries, mild outbreaks can be expected to occur after the winter; here, the season is normally between January and June. For some reason, the outbreak of chickenpox in 2018 has been uncharacteristically high, and the children being infected are generally younger than is usual. My suspicion is that this year’s outbreak may be the result of statistically lower adherence to Vietnam’s proper vaccination schedule, which provides protection from this disease. Perhaps because of this, there is a much lower grade of immunity to this viral infection among children than there should be. It’s also possible that unvaccinated parents have been passing chickenpox on to their young children, which may be a significant contributing factor.

Chickenpox is highly contagious. It is mainly transmitted on the breath—the respiratory droplets pass from person to person as the result of proximity, coughing, or by a child touching a surface where the droplets have landed. Another way that chickenpox spreads is through the watery blisters it produces on the skin that fill with high quantities of the virus—fluid from broken blisters can easily spread this disease. Children tend to spread the virus between themselves very quickly, which is why it is so common in schools and kindergartens where children may play together and put their hands in their mouths after touching each other’s toys.

In most cases of chickenpox, the victim shows the typical symptoms of viral infection—such as fever, runny nose, abdominal pain or a headache. Sometimes they look very tired and seem to have a sore throat; after several days they will probably have a rash on the skin. The most common symptom is fever, and the second is the chickenpox rash, which is very easy to recognize.

The skin eruptions are maculopapular (flat, red and bumpy) for a few hours and then vesicular (fluid-filled sac) for 3–4 days, eventually

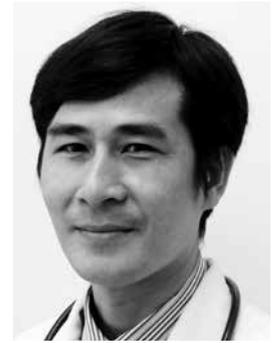
leaving a granular scab. An infected child can pass the disease to others for as long as five but usually 1–2 days before the rashes appear, until all lesions are crusted (usually five days later). Contagiousness may be longer in patients with altered immunity. Vaccinated children who are infected with chickenpox will experience very mild symptoms, if at all.

There are some very common misconceptions about chickenpox both within Vietnam and overseas. Here, many parents believe that a child infected with chickenpox should not take a bath. This is quite wrong; in fact, regular bathing is important to prevent bacterial infection and itch. Some parents worry about the wind and don’t let their child go outside or use a fan. There is no danger from a breeze for sufferers of chickenpox, and their comfort and cleanliness is most important. Neither is there a danger from eating eggs or vegetables, as is sometimes believed.

In the West, it’s understood that chickenpox is more serious if caught for the first time in adulthood than it usually is in children. This has given rise to “chickenpox parties”, where parents actively seek for their child to become infected. This is unwise because of the risk of complications from the disease; in fact it is far preferable to ensure your child receives a vaccination against this disease, which will protect against both chickenpox itself and its potential consequences.

A child can get vaccinated against chickenpox after their first birthday. They should normally receive their booster after two or three years, although in the midst of an outbreak such as the one we are experiencing now, they may get their booster earlier, perhaps after three months. Adult women who have never been vaccinated should consider it a must to get shots for MMR and chickenpox if they intend to get pregnant—a developing fetus exposed to this virus may suffer from a heart defect or neurological disorder. Everyone living in a house with a baby should be vaccinated too, as newborns who contract chickenpox can manifest very severe symptoms.

The chickenpox vaccine is very good, and lasts a lifetime. Before we had this vaccination, the rate of children suffering from chickenpox was very high, and the incidence of complications of the disease were also high. With the vaccine, the appearance of the disease and its complications are now rare. Recently people seem to have been worrying about the chickenpox shot and don’t want to take it—I would strongly advise vaccination for all children. ■



The only Vietnamese national on Family Medical Practice’s pediatrics team, **Dr. Truong Hoang Quy** has core medical competencies in internal medicine, nutrition, vaccination and infectious disease. He studied at Thai Binh Medical University, Hanoi Medical University and at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia.

TREATING CHICKENPOX

- It’s important not to try to break the blisters to release the water, even if they’re itchy and uncomfortable. A broken blister may be exposed to other pathogens and may leave an ugly scar.
- Do not cover blisters with antibiotic powder, as this can make the symptoms worse.
- Cut the child’s fingernails or put mittens on them to prevent scratching, or use an antihistamine cream to reduce itching.
- If the child gets fever, use Tylenol or paracetamol, but not aspirin, which can make the disease worse.
- See a doctor if the rash gets worse after four days, if they have difficulty breathing or are coughing a lot, or if vomiting occurs.
- Be sure to let the child drink a lot of water.

>> The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

Inspected and judged an outstanding school by British Government Inspectors (January 2017), the ABCIS is one of the few schools worldwide awarded this Department for Education rating. Progress of students puts the ABCIS among the top 8% of schools in the world. Providing education for 2-18 year olds in a supportive and friendly environment, it delivers a culturally adapted version of the British National Curriculum supported by Cambridge & AQA IGCSE and AS/A levels. Students are prepared for Universities in the UK, USA, Australia, Korea and Canada.



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Primary & Secondary Campus:
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www.etonhouseanphu.com



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www.issp.edu.vn



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(028) 2253-4728
www.steps.edu.vn
Steps2017vn@gmail.com



The International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

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



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+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@aavn.edu.vn
www.aavn.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

ISHCMC is a leading school in HCMC with a rich history, yet is always innovating. Students from over 50 nationalities are taught in modern learning environments by trained IB educators specializing in inquiry-led teaching. This, paired with international-standard safeguarding policies ensures that all children are safe and supported to reach their potential. ISHCMC students develop a life-long passion for asking questions and searching beyond what is asked in the classroom ultimately becoming true 21st century citizens equipped for the future. The 2017/18 academic school year will see the new Secondary Campus open and the continued refurbishment in the Primary Campus.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
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www.aurorareggio.com

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



The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 21 nationalities. TAS provides an American-based curriculum with rigorous performance standards and a variety of academic offerings including Advanced Placement courses, university credit courses through our partnership with Missouri State University, and an Intensive ESL Program for English Language Learners. In 2018, The American School will open its new, sprawling mega-campus in District 2's An Phu Neighborhood. This purpose-built facility will house up to 1200 students from pre-nursery through grade 12. This is an exciting time in the growth of the school!

177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
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admissions@tas.edu.vn
www.tas.edu.vn



WONDERKIDS MONTESSORI SCHOOL (WMS)

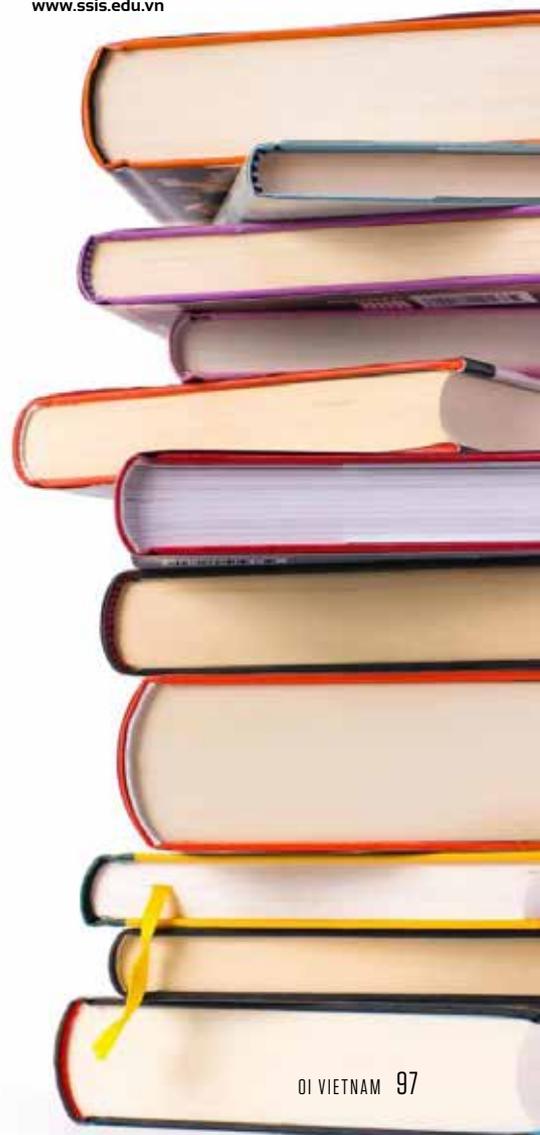
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montessori-office@wonderkids.edu.vn
www.wonderkidsmontessori.edu.vn

Campus 2:
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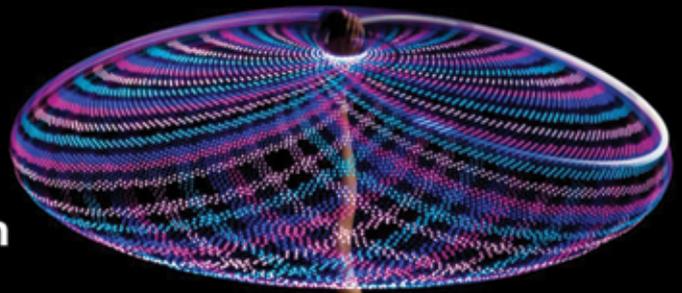
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