



VIETNAM 07,08-2020

A LIFE IN SAIGON

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About Life in Saigon

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Entrepreneurs



Tập 2/2020

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Managing Director **JIMMY VAN DER KLOET**
jimmy@oivietnam.com

Managing Editor &
Art Director **CHRISTINE VAN**
christine@oivietnam.com

Online Editor **JAMES PHAM**
jpham@oivietnam.com

Staff Photographer **VY LAM**
vy@oivietnam.com

Graphic Designer **LAM SON VU**
lamson@oivietnam.com

For advertising, please contact:

English 🇬🇧 **0948 779 219**
Vietnamese 🇻🇳 **0932 164 629**

General **advertising@oivietnam.com**

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Lawrence Young (FCSI) is the Senior Associate for Holborn Asset Management Group. Originally from the United Kingdom, Lawrence has been a finance professional for thirty years having worked in many jurisdictions across Europe and Asia as a stockbroker, Eurobond trader and interbank money broker for many of the biggest financial institutions globally. He is based in Holborn's Vietnam offices based in Ho Chi Minh City and services clients in over 22 different countries in wealth management. His areas of expertise lie in offshore tax-efficient saving structures, higher education fee planning, inheritance tax planning, pension planning, life and health insurance, global investment property, offshore company formation and offshore banking.

What is a SPAC in the investment world?

I bet you haven't heard of this.

SPECIAL-PURPOSE ACQUISITION companies, or SPACs, are having a big moment recently. Led by some of 2020's buzziest new stocks, a stampede of SPAC initial public offerings has hit the US market over the past six weeks.

You may have heard of them referred to as "blank check" companies, SPACs raise money from investors in an IPO, then use the proceeds to acquire a business, typically within two years.

Some of the bigger examples in recent days would be the electric and fuel-cell startup Nikola (ticker: NKLA), the online sports betting site DraftKings (DKNG), and spaceflight company, which everyone has by now heard of, Virgin Galactic Holdings (SPCE), which all went public by merging with SPACs, forgoing a traditional IPO. As a result they have all since inspired cult followings, with their stocks multiplying several times over. It isn't a blind following as in all cases the companies are strong and very exciting in what they are delivering.

Not every SPAC can boast that kind of success though, so homework still naturally needs to be done. But, it's clearly a model that has won acceptance from investors around the world.

USD13.6 billion was raised last year alone through 59 SPAC IPOs. And that is nothing compared to what is expected to be a new record in 2020, even as the traditional IPO market has been slow to revive. This year, 32 SPACs have already gone public, raising USD10.4 billion—nearly half of all IPO dollars generated in 2020—according to SPACInsider, a website devoted to research and data about the industry. Nine more SPACs are on deck to list soon. That USD13.6 billion record will get smashed very shortly so it's worth sitting up and taking notice.

As a result, at least 96 SPACs are searching for acquisition targets, with a

combined USD25 billion in their trusts, per SPACInsider. Because special-purpose acquisition companies tend to do transactions with a market value of three or four times their trust, as much as USD100 billion worth of companies could go public in the next two years, just from existing SPACs.

There are good reasons to pay attention. A growing proportion of new SPACs are coming from experienced issuers that can attract better deals, more fundamentals-focused investors, and high-quality management teams. And that is the key to all of this and where you should be looking. Experience!

Take Virgin Galactic. Although well below its frothy February high of over USD37, at a recent USD15.30, the space-tourism venture's stock is still more than 50% above its precombination value. (By convention, a SPAC goes public at USD10 per unit—a common share and a fraction of a warrant, generally exercisable at USD11.50.)

Virgin Galactic's chairman, Chamath Palihapitiya—an early executive at Facebook (FB) who founded the Social Capital venture-capital fund—is back for more. In late April, while the traditional IPO market was shuttered, he raised two additional SPACs: Social Capital Hedosophia Holdings II (IPOB), with USD414 million in IPO proceeds to seek technology investments in the U.S., and Social Capital Hedosophia Holdings III (IPOC), which raised USD828 million to target tech companies abroad.

Other prominent SPAC sponsors have returned to the market this year. IPOs in 2020 from serial sponsors include those of B. Riley Principal Merger II (BMRG), CC Neuberger Principal Holdings (PCPL), Churchill Capital III (CCXX), and Chardan Healthcare Acquisition 2 (CHAQ).

The record number of SPACs

looking for targets could mean more competition for deals. But there is evidence that the universe of companies willing to sell to a SPAC is greater now than ever before.

Although not as well-publicized as Nikola or DraftKings, other combinations have been successful. I recommended buying shares of SPAC that merged with Vivint Smart Home (VVNT) before its transaction closed in January. The shares ran up to \$28 before investors got a dose of reality. But at a recent USD17.40, they are still up more than 60% since January!

Vertiv Holdings (VRT), a digital-infrastructure company, recently traded at USD14, up about 30% since its deal was announced in December. Its sponsor, Goldman Sachs Group (GS), has filed to raise a new SPAC: GS Acquisition Holdings II.

A bet on a SPAC is a bit of a speculative leap. It's best to stick with reputable and experienced sponsors and management teams—and not to expect every SPAC to trade like Nikola or Virgin Galactic.

The risks are limited, however. The cash raised in an IPO goes into a trust, where it earns interest until a target company is acquired. If investors don't like the deal, they can redeem their common stock for a share of the cash in the trust.

Special-purpose acquisition companies give investors a chance to get on the ground floor of a new stock, with daily liquidity and a guaranteed redemption value.

So, if you are looking for something a bit different from the ground up, a SPAC is where you should be looking. ■

As always, get in touch if you need wealth management assistance from Vietnam's leading wealth manager, Lawrence.young@holbornassets.com



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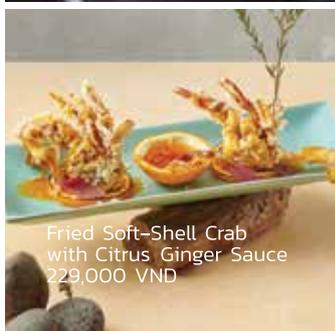
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TROI OI!

The country in numbers

USD 225,000

WAS SPENT ON FAKE METEORITES BY A MAN FROM SAIGON.

Son, 49, and his wife Nga, 45, residents of Lap

Vo District in Dong Thap Province have been arrested and charged for "fraudulent appropriation of assets." According to investigators, Son and his wife took a piece of clay, painted it black and covered it with a type of coal paper before spreading rumors they had a meteorite that could freeze mercury and treat terminal illnesses.

They advertised the clay to a 58-year-old man who owns a drug store in Ho Chi Minh City and set up a meeting. Son told the man the piece of clay was a "holy and spiritual gift" inherited over generations. In order to sell it, they had to organize rituals and engage in charity work so its "super power" would be transferred to a new household and owner.

To gain the customer's trust, Son performed a trick to make the clay float on water, making up various mysterious stories to boost its reputation. The convinced drug store owner deposited VND1 billion to secure the "space rock" before paying the additional VND3.2 billion.



2 DRUG TRAFFICKERS ARRESTED AFTER A CAR CHASE.

Ha Tinh police detained two men after a car chase of over 15 km following which they seized 31 kg of methamphetamine. The incident occurred at around 2:30 am in Huong Khe District, which borders Laos and is notorious for drug smuggling. Vietnam is a key trafficking hub for narcotics from the Golden Triangle, an intersection of China, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar and the world's second largest drug producing area behind the Golden Crescent in South Asia. The repeated seizure of huge amounts of narcotics has been happening despite Vietnam having some of the world's toughest drug laws. Those convicted of possessing or smuggling more than 600 grams of heroin or cocaine or over 2.5 kg of methamphetamine could face capital punishment. Production or sale of 100 grams of heroin or 300 grams of any other illegal substance is also punishable by death.

10,000

NEW DRUG USERS WERE REGISTERED IN VIETNAM LAST YEAR, WITH THE USERS GETTING YOUNGER AND CONCENTRATED IN THE SOUTHERN REGION.

Revealing this at a conference, Deputy Minister of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs Nguyen Thi Ha said that there are now middle school students in many places using drugs. Many rehabilitation centers in the country are overcrowded, she noted. Vietnam had 111 licensed centers with around 35,000 inmates as of April.

As of last November the country had 235,314 drug addicts in its official records, 10,215 more than a year earlier. Ngo Thanh Binh, deputy director of the Ministry of Public Security's department of drug crime investigation, said the number of addicts aged between 12 and 18 is on the rise, and it is difficult to send them to rehab due to legal complications arising from international charters on child rights Vietnam has signed. According to the department, the quantity of drugs seized last year was the highest ever at nearly nine tons.



15TH-CENTURY

VIETNAM POTTERY FETCHES USD455,000 AT FRENCH AUCTION.

The jar, 33.6 centimeters high, is painted with blue peonies and Buddhist iconography. According to the auction house, the jar was made with a "powerful form, bold design" and technique of painting with underglaze cobalt blue. It was in the personal collection of J.E. Hagen, working in the Dutch colonial civil service in eastern India in the 20th century. He was gifted the jar in 1947 by a daughter of the Aroe Matoa XLIV, chief prince of the kingdom of Wajo in Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The U.K.-owned Christie's has sold a number of artworks from Vietnam, including a painting by Mai Trung Thu titled "Nu" (Nude) in Hong Kong and Le Pho's "Nue" (Nude), which fetched USD1.4 million last year, the highest price ever for a Vietnamese painting.



100-YEAR-OLD

SAIGON RAILWAY BUILDING'S FATE IS UP IN THE AIR.



A dispute is brewing between HCMC and the transport ministry over the fate of a colonial building that once served as Saigon's railway headquarters. Last year city authorities had proposed a conservation plan for the Hoa Xa complex at 136 Ham Nghi Street in District 1, which comprises two buildings, one L-shaped and the other rectangular. In a letter to the Ministries of Transport and Finance, they had said the city "would like to take over the Hoa Xa complex for preservation."

The bigger, L-shaped building would be used as the central control center for the Metro Line No.1 that is close to completion, and the rest would be connected to the metro's underground space and house historical railway artifacts, the letter said. But the proposal was shot down by the Vietnam Railway Corporation (VNR), which owns the complex.

Originally known as the Bureau du Chemin de fer (railway office) of the Indochina Railway Company, the building was the headquarters of the Ministry of Transport and Post of the South Vietnam government before 1975. The city has issued it a land use right certificate for the complex for 50 years, or until January 1, 2046, it said.

USD17 BILLION

BOOST TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

trillion over the next decade in a master plan to improve access to public transport and limit the use of private vehicles. Under the plan, which was rolled out last month, the city will have a comprehensive bus network by 2030, three metro lines — from downtown Ben Thanh to suburban Suoi Tien theme park, from Ben Thanh to Tham Luong in outlying District 12 and from Bay Hien Intersection in Tan Binh District to Saigon Bridge — and a bus rapid transit system.

Other items proposed are a light rail route between Thu Thiem, a new urban area in District 2, and Long Thanh in neighboring Dong Nai Province, where a new airport is being built, small buses with fewer than 17 seats, public electric motorbikes and bicycles, and dedicated bus lanes. In 2021-25 the focus will be on improving bus services, and in the next five years mass transit vehicles will receive top priority. This month the city scrapped three more bus routes, and is left with 129 out of the original 136. The Department of Transport said buses on the three routes had failed to attract patrons and were thus making losses.





HARNN Heritage spa

Refined Relaxation

Luxurious wellness experience awaits you on idyllic island at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort

Text by **Dana McNairn**

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

WELLNESS TOURISM IS A rapidly growing sector of the global economy, valued just two years ago at a staggering USD639 billion annually. This is in no doubt due to the growing demand from proactive consumers wanting to embrace alternative and holistic therapies. We are prioritizing our health and wellbeing in the pursuit of achieving a better balance with our mental, physical, emotional and social states.

I too am in search of calm, seeking a leisurely, relaxing and yes, healthy escape. With this in mind, it was time for a wellness break and InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort beckoned.

Phu Quoc is Vietnam's largest island (and the largest in the Gulf of Thailand) and is part of the UNESCO designated Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve. The biosphere aims to protect the land and marine resources that are so abundant in this southwestern corner of the country. Also included in the protected area is Phu Quoc National Park, a forested area covering more than half the island. The surrounding sea has a rich diversity of marine life such as dugongs and hawksbill turtles, swimming among coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass ecosystems.

Located on Bai Truong, one of the longest beaches on the island,



InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort nestles on its own secluded and private white sand beach surrounded by the turquoise sea and rolling hills of lush karst forests. This location for a health and wellness break offers not only the unparalleled InterContinental luxury and hospitality, but in an environment of almost magical beauty.

And as part of my wellness and tranquility reboot, I make a beeline for the HARNN Heritage Spa. The HARNN Lifestyle brands of aromatherapy, bath and spa, fragrance and soaps are a multiple award-winning product line from Thailand. With beautifully appointed treatment suites that appear to 'float' on the lush Lotus Lagoon, **HARNN Heritage Spa** is a place of natural serenity offering guests a unique and luxurious wellness experience inspired through the long tradition of healing Asian therapies. Embracing the Eastern wisdom passed down from generation to generation perfected over thousands of years, this international award-winning spa incorporates Dong Y, traditional Vietnamese medicines into their treatments with a focus on the balance of different sources of energy (Qi) through our Outer Body and Inner Body philosophy.

Dong Y is based on yin and yang principles and the five elements (fire, earth, water, metal, wood), and the



Herring salad



Sora & Umi



INK 360



Ombra



HARNN Heritage spa

interaction of these on your internal energy. The therapist will determine your element in order to provide the most soothing aromatherapy oils used in your session. Signature treatments use local botanicals of herbs and spices, along with indigenous bamboo, coconut and natural pearl. This very distinct sense of place is epitomized by the spa's signature scent: black pepper and lavender, an exotic combination and very refreshing. Guests can choose a range of healing services including Vietnam, Thai, Ayurveda and more aromatherapy for rejuvenating mind and body. Part of what the spa calls its Inner Body philosophy, it is balanced with an Outer Body philosophy. The Outer Body is calmed by the fact the spa is hidden away in a secluded corner of the resort, providing a haven of complete relaxation and renewal. The bamboo treatment suites appear to 'float' on the tranquil lotus-dotted lagoon. Since each suite also has open-air spaces shielded with bamboo louvers, the Outer Body is further soothed by a blurring of the line between indoors and outdoors. This is the ultimate in rejuvenation and

rebalancing and I cannot get enough of it. Afterwards I levitated out the door.

The healthy balance continues with the resort's six restaurants and bars, an eclectic but thoughtful mix of the island's unique produce and seafood, along with five-star international cuisine. One lunch we enjoy the herring salad at Sora & Umi, the Vietnamese-Japanese restaurant. The added bonus with Phu Quoc is the abundance of prized local specialties such as the high-quality fish sauce and peppercorns. Our salads are strewn with fresh tropical herbs and punchy fish sauce. The Sea Shack (on the beach!) for another lunch is grilled grouper served with fennel salad and my partner enjoys the Phu Quoc chicken salad with shredded cabbage and fresh mint. Ombra, an Italian restaurant by the pool, a perfect place to rest after some challenging activities at the beach, serves the coolest homemade detox and garden salad that will totally change your mind about "eat clean". All restaurants offer a variety of local fruits if you'd prefer for your dessert and a great mix of healthy drinks if you're abstaining from alcohol.

I can hardly drag myself away from the spa (or that lovely beach), but the range of activities is just too good to miss. Mornings start with yoga by the beach to set the chill intention for the day. Those days passed with beach volley ball, kayaking and kite flying. There is a 24-hour gym with equipment for light and intense workouts, and personal trainers to help motivate you. Aqua gym activities are at the Oasis or Vista pools and you can do laps at the latter as well. Rotating daily activities are great for adults and kids, and include cultural tours and excursions to pepper and pearl farms, while high energy adventures include hiking, water sports and island-hopping. The Planet Trekkers Children's Club will also keep kids entertained, as will the family pool, resplendent with inflatable toys and water slides.

The other thing I can't get enough of here is sundowners. That has to be at INK 360, the tallest rooftop bar on the island, located on the 19th floor of the resort's Sky Tower. Sure, there's a famous giant squid-like sculpture (a ship-eating mythological 'kraken' to be exact) tentacles waving and embracing the bar, but it's the deck outside that holds my attention. If my mind and body weren't already so putty-relaxed, this would have been the clincher.

InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort western location on the island and this sky terrace combine for sunset Shangri-La overlooking beach, sea, hills and beyond. As the flaming ball of pink-orange languidly drops into the horizon I order a drink. Normally, I'm a beer woman, but the ingredients in the Uncle Ho Penicillin cocktail are too inviting to ignore: Scotch, lime juice, ginger syrup, smoked lapsang souchong tea, Phu Quoc honey and black cardamom. There's just something about being on an island that makes these heady cocktail ingredients pop. Our conversation drifts into comfortable silence as the sky darkens to deep violet, inviting the stars to come out and join in the heavenly show. We are loose-limbed, relaxed and rejuvenated. The wellness and tranquility reboot worked. ■

Meet David Lacroix, the Executive Chef of TUI BLUE Nam Hoi An and read about his beautiful memories of his cooking career





Why did you become a chef?

I am not sure why I became a chef. I guess it was because when I was a child I liked to eat many different types of food that my parents cooked for me. I was a gourmand; I always like to eat and enjoy eating so I guess this is why.

Then how did you start your cooking career?

When I was a kid I preferred to make pastry, it was a playground for me. I also ordered a lot of cookbooks back then. Ever since I was 10 years old, I always knew that I wanted to be a cook. And then until I reached the age of 14, I decided to become one.

Describe your childhood?

I was an underperforming student while I was at school, and schooling annoyed me a lot. I've always loved hometown, a small village of only 200 people called Chalvaine, in North-Eastern France. We produced so much of our own food in our garden, my mother did the cooking while my father would hunt. I think this is the best village in France or maybe in the world for me.

What are you most thankful for?

I always feel very fortunate to have chosen this work when I was a kid because I see many young people who

don't know what they really want to do.

Describe one of your most memorable experiences as a chef?

I think it was the time when I worked at the Inn in Manitou in Canada. I was very lucky to have worked with great colleagues. I enjoyed the job so much that I found joy daily and the food made by our chef was really excellent. It was a beautiful place. The chef was very well respected and he also paid great respect to other people. I remember that he never forgot to thank us at the end of every shift and before we went home.

What do you like the most about Vietnam?

I first arrived in Vietnam in 2003 and fell in love with the country because I was able to learn a lot of things that we tend to forget in France. This country never ceases to amaze me, and I also find the Vietnamese culture quite complex. It took me many years to understand it and I am still learning.

What else do you think you need to learn more about Vietnam?

The language. Although I have been here for so long I can only speak a little Vietnamese. I just wish I could speak more of this language.

If you were not a chef, what career would you choose?

I would do anything related to a manual job, like an engineer. I'd like to use my hands to build something and would like to see it completed.

Tell us about what you find unique about the food concept at TUI BLUE?

You know, I actually do not like to use the word "concept" when it comes to culinary. For me you can talk about the concept of a car but not for food. TUI BLUE offers a variety of healthy and balanced food, and this is the easiest thing to do in Vietnam because you could easily find fresh ingredients everywhere. The next time you get a chance to visit TUI BLUE Nam Hoi An, join me for a BBQ seafood cooking class. But first, we will need to wake up earlier on the day for a morning walk to the Tam Tien Fish Market to find the best kind of 'straight-from-the-ocean smell' fish and then head back to our resort to pick the freshest herbs from our organic garden. Also at TUI BLUE Nam Hoi An, there are 4 restaurants for you to choose from so you can just tell us what you like and we will serve the best type of food according to your taste. ■

For more info, visit www.tui-blue.com/en/en/hotels/tui-blue-nam-hoi-an

Text and Images Provided by
TUI BLUE Nam Hoi An





A Magical Summer With Four Seasons

MAKE THIS SUMMER A MAGICAL and unforgettable one with a stay at Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai, Hoi An. Located on the pristine Ha My beach, one of the most beautiful beaches in Vietnam, The Nam Hai offers 100 luxurious villas spread across 35 hectares. Here, you will find that taking a vacation is as not just about relaxing the body, but also tending to the mind and spirit. Throughout the resort, you will find that mindfulness is the main guiding principle, alongside a healthy dose of fun, laughter and curiosity, making Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai the perfect vacation spot for anyone looking for a recharge or families looking to reconnect in a special way.

Retreat To A Seaside Escapade

Taking center stage in the magnificent seaside escapade are three tiers of infinity pools and tropical gardens with 4,500 coconut trees that gently cascade towards the East Sea. The villas are strategically positioned in horseshoe-arched bays to optimize the sea view, while ensconced in complete privacy with their own pathways and an intimate garden.

Recharge With A Smorgasbord Of Activities

There is something for everyone with an exciting schedule of daily activities—from Good Morning Yoga to Loving Kindness Meditation, to feeding the fish and cooking classes at the highly acclaimed Nam Hai Cooking Academy. Take it up one notch with a medley



of adrenalin-fuelled water sports like X-Jet Blades and jet skiing, as well as complimentary windsurfing and kayaking for the adventurous. For a one-of-a-kind experience, release “happy hormones” enhance self-esteem and fast-track flexibility with AntiGravity® Yoga. Suitable for yoga-practitioners and non-yogis alike, this ‘flying’ practice uses suspended hammocks to master gravity defying poses and is incredibly fun and liberating.

Recenter With Thich Nhat Hanh’s Teachings

No stay at The Nam Hai is complete without a visit to The Heart of the Earth Spa. Inspired by the teachings of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, the award-winning spa offers crystal singing bowl sound healing and the complimentary “Goodnight Kiss to the Earth”. For a lovely end-of-day ritual, write your own “Love Letter to the Earth” and float it with a wishing candle on the spa lotus pond.



Bathe in the beautiful sound of singing bowls, which are tuned to the same frequency as nature, as you recenter and rejuvenate your senses.

Refresh With Fresh Produce And Menu Twists

Guests will enjoy the repertoire of traditional Vietnamese and contemporary Western cuisines served under the breezy coconut palms at La Sen restaurant, which offers sumptuous all-day dining. In July, The Nam Hai culinary team will be introducing all-new menus with the freshest seasonal fruits from dragon fruit to avocado, reworked in creative ways. Executive Sous Chef John Oh (formerly Four Seasons Seoul) and his team has created a delightful breakfast menu that brings the buffet to the table, while Chef Ly and her pastry aficionados have devised melt-in-the-mouth desserts



with local coconut, rambutan and lychee.

A playful children's menu has also been conceived for families vacationing with youngsters, as well as a revamp of Vietnamese and International favorites: Chef Yamlala has been stirring up magic with Indian curries; Chef A Lang Phoung and his crew have been refining Western plates; while Chef Yen and his team have been imparting ever-more modern twists into their Vietnamese delicacies.

The chic, ocean-facing Bar, which opens from 4pm till late, will dazzle with its range of innovative cocktails, made using natural ingredients that are specific to the region. Exclusive to Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai, the Birds Nest cocktail is a delicate, refreshing drink that's distinguished by its notes of fruit, mandarin and a hint of spice. Noteworthy cocktails include the Pho cocktail, a deceptively light drink garnished with Vietnam beef jerky that pays homage to the national dish, pho. Served in a bowl, the Pho cocktail is enjoyed the same way you'd eat noodle dish. ■

For further info or reservations, contact Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai at +84 235 394 0000 or email reservations.hoian@fourseasons.com.

SPECIAL PROMOTION

From 1 July to 30 September 2020, Vietnamese residents enjoy one complimentary villa night for every night booked in One Bedroom Villas, Family Villas and One Bedroom Pool Villas plus VND2,200,000 resort credit per stay and a generous 24-hour rolling check in and check out. Enjoy an exclusive 25% savings on dining, spa treatments, tours, transfers and watersports during this period.



Beach body - by @maky_matt (Czech Republic)

Women

Free-to-use photography app Agora shares the final results from its latest competition, #Women2020 which gathered 10,154 photo submissions from amateur and professional photographers all over the world. Irani photographer @mohammadmoheimany won the contest with 'hijab.iran.tehran', the photo that collected the most votes in the Agora app.



Melanin angel - by @kobbykatalist (Ghana)



Women - by @marcotagliarino (Italy)



Lady in Red - by @hapelinium (Indonesia)



Strong - by @cinemaeople (Ukraine)



Nurse - by @drozzan (Indonesia)



Beach body - by @maky_matt (Czech Republic)



Nguyet - by @nguyenvuphuoc (Vietnam)



Mother - by @adeelchishti (Pakistan)

A Life

A Life
in
Saigon



Daniel Spero

Excerpts from a pictorial novel about life in Saigon

Text by **Danie Spero**

WITH MADNESS STILL

gesticulating from my 20s I strove for normalcy in my 30s, getting married and having a kid, working regular hours. The locale, however, was less conventional. *A Life in Saigon* is a spear through time in an expat's journey, from almost dying of cholera and again in a plane going down in a violent storm to a neighbor hanging herself on Mother's Day due to

the shame of her son's gambling debts. The best friend moved to Phnom Penh and became a meth addict. The wife was harassed out of her job by a pathological German boss. When my daughter was born the nurse had to be wrestled away from pushing the head back in because the doctor was having his dinner. As the lone foreigner in the neighborhood, potted plants and buckets of urine had

to be dropped on would-be robbers in the night and heroin addicts had to be chased away with a baseball bat in the day—all the while going *Mad Max* on an electric bicycle just to get to work. ■

A Life in Saigon by Daniel Spero is a pictorial novel with more than 100 embedded images. To order a copy, visit www.danielspero.com. Below is an excerpt from the book.

October 22, 2009



Maya and Ngoc have been recovering for the last few days at the hospital. Both seem healthy and content. Maya is really well behaved. She hardly cries, just sticking out her tongue like a lizard. She

barely made a peep when they gave her a shot.

On the day after her birth I went into the nursery where the babies born the previous day were resting. There

were seven of them lined up in front of a picture window where parents observed from the other side of the glass. Of the seven babies six had thick heads of black hair and caramel colored skin while one had almost no hair and pink skin. The Vietnamese fathers kept smiling at me and pointing at her as if to confirm that she was mine. She was definitely mine.

Over those days Ngoc worked with Maya to get her to attach to the breast and start feeding. She didn't latch on initially, which was frustrating for Ngoc, but soon nature took its course. Each time I picked Maya up the nurses kept reminding me not to drop her. They also gave us a tutorial on how to bathe her, most of which seemed intuitive.

On the third day we were having a nice time bonding as Ngoc's mom, Phuong, sat by the window looking melancholy. The more we enjoyed ourselves the more she made a show of being upset, making sniffing or whimpering sounds. Finally, after Maya fell asleep I turned to Ngoc and asked, "What's going on with your mom?"

Ngoc and Phuong spoke Vietnamese



for a few minutes before Ngoc turned back to me and said, “Dear, she’s sad because she’s so poor. She says the money you spent to have Maya in this fancy hospital is enough for her to live on for more than two years.”

“It seems like each time we’re with her it always comes back to her complaining about her financial situation.”

“Well, she’s very poor dear.”

“Okay, well if she’s gonna keep making it an issue then let’s address this. When was the last time she had a job?”

Ngoc and her mom spoke Vietnamese before Ngoc answered, “She got fired from the police when she got pregnant with Sang.”

“How old is Sang?”

“Sang is thirteen.”

“So what has she been doing for work for the last thirteen years?”

They spoke for a few minutes. “Well dear, she says she couldn’t work.”

“Why? What reason does she have for not working for thirteen years during the

prime earning years of her life?”

Again they spoke for a few minutes before Ngoc translated, “She says she was too sad.”

“For thirteen years? Lots of people who suffer from depression or mental health issues still go to work. Did she do anything to address her mental health?”

They conversed before the delayed response. “It was too difficult for her.”

“What was?”

“Everything. She had to be home to care for Sang.”

“Single parents all over the world still manage to work. Sang went to school, didn’t he? Has she even tried to get a job in thirteen years?”

After a brief exchange Ngoc answered, “No.”

“Well, that’s the problem Ngoc. If your mom doesn’t want to be poor all she needs to do is to stop making excuses and get a job.”

Ngoc translated. After a stint of Vietnamese she replied, “She says she’s too old now.”

“Too old? She’s 48. The retirement age in the US is 67. She says she’s too sad to work, she’s too old to work, she’s got a child and can’t work. These are excuses Ngoc and none are valid. If poverty is her problem she needs to get a job. Foreign companies have opened factories in Phú Yên Province that pay a decent wage. Why not get a job at one of them? What about getting a job as a cleaner someplace?”

They spoke in Vietnamese before Ngoc answered, “Dear, she says that working in a factory is too hard for her and she doesn’t want to be a cleaner.”

“How does she know factory work is too hard for her? Has she tried it?”

“No dear.”

“And she doesn’t want to be a cleaner? Do you think anyone wants to go to their jobs? Unless you get lucky enough to do something you’re passionate about no one wants to go to work. That’s why they pay you for it, because if you had a choice that’s not how you’d choose to spend your time. If she wants money she needs to work.”

Ngoc and her mom spoke for a few minutes while I gazed at Maya sleeping. Then Ngoc turned to me. “She says that it’s too difficult for her to work.”

“Work is difficult. That’s why it’s called work. That’s why you get paid for it.”

“She says that you should help her. As her son-in-law it’s your responsibility to help take care of her.”

“It’s not my responsibility. My responsibility is to that little bundle sleeping right over there.” I pointed to Maya. “She wants me to support her, but where does she think my money comes from? Let me answer that for her – I work! If I need money I don’t ask for a handout, I work for it, something she’s more than capable of doing. She needs to stop making excuses or asking for handouts and take responsibility for herself.”

They went back and forth in Vietnamese. I'd hit a nerve but I didn't care. I was sick of Phuong acting helpless and hapless but doing nothing to change it. Finally Ngoc responded, saying, "She says that if you were a good person you would help her."

"I am helping her. This challenging of her perspective is invaluable. She's 48 and in good health. She's not too old to work. Explaining that to her is giving her help."

They spoke again. "Dear, she says that's not helpful. She wants you to give her a monthly budget. She says that is more helpful."

I shook my head and laughed. "I'll bet. Who wouldn't like a monthly allowance? I'd like that too." I paused, still in disbelief. "I'm not providing a monthly budget, but I will provide help. Ngoc, you know how Vietnamese have food carts, like the glass cases on wheels that they sell food or drinks on the street from. You know?"

"Like the street sellers?"

"Yeah, those wheeled carts where they make food from in alleys and on sidewalks."

I continued, "I'll buy her one of those, a brand new one, and I'll outfit it with anything she needs. All she has to do is wheel it to the main road each day and

sell food. She could do something simple like coffee. She could make some money and she wouldn't have to work at a company; she could be her own boss and choose her own hours. Let her know I'll buy her one of those carts and everything she needs to get started."

"Yeah, that's a good idea dear. She lives right next to the main road in Tuy Hòa." They then spoke in Vietnamese before the reply came, "She says she doesn't want to do that."

"Why?"

"She doesn't want her neighbors to see because then they'll see that she's poor."

"She is poor!"

"She says, um, how can I say, she has pride, right? She has too much pride for that job. She would rather you give her a monthly budget."

"She's too prideful to do a job? I've worked jobs in fast food. You think I wanted my friends to see me taking orders at Burger King, but I did it. I worked in a sock factory. You think I liked doing that? I've mowed lawns, worked at a pretzel shop in the mall, hell, I worked power-washing the insides of cargo containers that were full of garbage just to make money to survive. I didn't not work out of pride; that's just foolish."

"She just doesn't want to work dear."

"Then she isn't my problem and I'm not giving her a monthly budget. My money is gonna be spent on Maya, not her. And let her know I don't wanna hear anything else about her money problems. If she's unwilling to work then it's her problem, not mine."

They spoke tersely for a few minutes. I could tell Ngoc was frustrated with her mom, but maybe she was frustrated with me too. Finally she looked at me. "I know you won't accept this, but she said fine, she won't talk to you about money anymore."

"I accept that. That's great."

"But she wants the money you would spend to buy the food cart you offered her. She said you offered to buy it for her anyway."

I laughed incredulously. "Absolutely not. I was willing to buy her a cart to empower her, to give her an opportunity, but she chose not to take it. The answer is no."

Phuong teared up and cried. I ignored her and went over to Maya to watch her sleep. I'm sure Phuong was upset. It sucks getting a hardline, but for a future that didn't involve her constantly pestering me to financially support her I had to take this stance.

After a few minutes Phuong stormed past me and left. "Dear, she's going outside to smoke a cigarette," Ngoc explained.

"Where does she get money for cigarettes?"

"I don't know dear, but maybe we should give her some support."

"No Ngoc, trust me. This is her hustle. She acts like the world is against her and she's such a sad sack that we should pity her, but look what happened when I cut through her excuses. Turns out she's just being a lazy blagger who doesn't want to work."

"I know dear, but still, her life is difficult and she needs money."

"Having a difficult life is not unique to her. People with difficult lives still work. If she was willing to do something, anything to show that she's willing to help support herself, then I'd be willing to help, but she's not so she's not my problem. Trust me, if we don't give her any money you'll see, she'll find a way; blaggers always do."

"I'm not sure. She seems pretty upset."

"Well, I'm upset too. We just had a baby and before we even check-out of the hospital she's asking for a monthly budget. It's disgraceful and insulting."

"I don't know. I... I just don't know." ■





THE GIAO LĨNH ROBE OF VIETNAMESE ANCIENT FASHION

The book "WEAVING A REALM" is the latest publication of Vietnam Centre. As an aesthetic introduction into Vietnam's ancient fashion, it is filled with illustrations, photos and other historical facts about Vietnamese costumes centuries ago, during the Later Lê dynasty.

With the content written in both Vietnamese and English, "Weaving a Realm" is expected to be the very first book of this theme for international readers, who want to learn about the attires of Vietnamese emperors, empresses, mandarins and servants.

ORDER THE BOOK
bit.ly/orderweavingarealm



Text & images
from the chapter “Giao Linh
Dress”, Weaving a Realm.

In the history of Vietnamese fashion, Chinese influence had been huge, similar to other countries such as Japan and Korea. For a very long time, the laws and etiquettes of China had been standards of many Vietnamese dynasties, applied in courts and adapted by different social classes. The same thing applied for fashion. However, just as in Japan and Korea, when foreign influence was absorbed, it became localized, creating unique traits of that region. Vietnam was no exception.

Giao Linh [交領], or cross collar, was a type of traditional collar in many Eastern Asian cultures, including China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. With the adoption of Chinese culture, Vietnamese also used and popularized this type of dress in their country before it faded away completely under the Nguyen dynasty. Before Nguyen lords of Cochinchina created and popularized the “national clothing” that was highcollared áo dài with turban, which modern-day Vietnamese called “Áo dài Khăn đóng,” Giao Linh dress had already existed in all social classes of Vietnam, from commoners to nobles, for at least 1000 years. If there was a true “national clothing,” then this dress deserved this title the most, more than any other ones in Vietnamese history.

During the Trần dynasty, in the **Abbreviated Records of An Nam**, Lê Tắc wrote about this small detail in Uy Vũ Miếu record about the story of two men named Fubo at Lingnan (referring to modern-day Vietnam), “the Han dynasty had two men named Fubo, who were considered virtuous to the Lingnan people. The first man was Pili Luhou, and the second was Xinxi Mahou (Ma Yuan)... If Xinxi Mahou did not conquer this land, then its people would still be wearing left-lapeled Giao Linh...”¹ (Trần Quang Đức - original Vietnamese translation). Throughout many centuries of change, even by the Nguyễn dynasty, this collar style continued to exist solely as a prestigious ceremonial attire, with the high-collared Ngũ Thân shirt replacing it as the most widespread style. One could say that this style was the true “traditional dress” of the Vietnamese.

Its name came from its collar crossing to the right of the wearer and to the left of the viewer. Giao Linh [交領 - cross collar], more accurately as Giao Linh Hữu Nhâm [交領右衽 - right-lapeled cross collar], or referred by Vietnamese as áo cổ chéo or áo tràng vạt, was the most basic type of dress in all Chinese-influenced societies, existing in almost all of their clothing systems.



Clothing was a way to showcase one's status in society. The higher in status, the more layers of clothing people would wear, and the more colorful those layers would be. They would also show off their ranks through their wide and loose sleeves. This mentality was quite understandable, since those of higher class with servants and would love to boast their wealth through excessive fabrics. Jerome Richard in **The History of Nature, People and Politics of Tonkin** had described how Later-Lê Vietnamese women liked to wear multiple layers, "In general, the women were elegant in their clothing. They wore a long skirt and one or multiple shirts with the same styles just like the men, but shorter..."² (Trần Quang Đức - original Vietnamese translation).

Those of the lower classes would prefer sleeves with reasonable widths or tight sleeves, and of simple colors. This stemmed from its flexibility in work, allowing people to move around with ease. The popularity of tight-sleeved clothes in the common class was recorded in history. When the Trịnh army took

over Phú Xuân in 1774, "to unify the inner and outer lands, customs should be the same," hence they ordered the commoners of Cochinchina to "wear short-sleeved Giao Linh clothes, with sleeves' width of choice," to follow "national custom" (which meant the custom of the Later-Lê dynasty in Tonkin).³ (Trần Quang Đức - original Vietnamese translation).

Just like in Vietnam, Giao Linh dresses were also the basis of many Asian traditional articles of clothing such as Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Myanmar, Ryukyu, and more. Within these, Hanbok of Korea and Wafuku of Japan continued to be prevalent to this day. Although through cultural evolution, both Hanbok and Wafuku had developed into distinct styles, different from the original designs, the basic forms still retained their shared roots. Compared to South Korea or Japan, Giao Linh dresses in Vietnam had become so foreign to modern Vietnamese culture, so much so that Vietnamese themselves saw the dresses as "Chinese clothing" with a Sinophobic mindset. However, in reality, Giao Linh dresses, in general, followed closely to Chinese styles

of similar periods and were mentioned many times in historical records like a form of national clothing.

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Reconstructed Hoàng Bào and Dịch Y, assumingly the attires for Vietnamese emperors and empresses in the Early Lê period.



“Beautiful Maidens Playing Musical Instruments” (Tổ Nữ Chơi Nhạc) series.
From the left to right: moon lute (đàn nguyệt), crane lute (đàn cò), tỳ bà lute and bamboo flute.



The Hoi An illustration

Text and Images Provided by **March Gallery**

18 MONTHS AGO, MARCH GALLERY staged Jack Clayton's first solo exhibition at artspace in the Anantara Hoi An resort. The work, about Hoi An, that Jack produced for this event marked a change in his work and was a springboard for his career. He has gone on to produce a collection for Hanoi and is now back in the depths of the neighborhoods in Saigon where he captures the spirit of Vietnam's street life.

At that solo exhibition, we displayed his illustrated history of Hoi An, which is framed by the town's street map that takes the shape of a whale. Limited edition black and white prints sold out quickly.

Now, we are able to present the full color version of this drawing, which had

always been Jack's vision, inspired by his fascination with the history of Hoi An and its culture. This is an archive quality print on 100% cotton paper that will remain as vibrant as if it had been colored with watercolor paints

For more than 2,000 years, the old port attracted merchants from Japan, Europe, China and India trading in silk, silver, copper, spices, cotton and ceramics. They all left their mark on this 'peaceful meeting place' and made it the welcoming town it is today. If you look carefully, you can see that the map of the town marks out the shape of a whale and a boat.

In Vietnamese mythology, the whale is thought to protect sailors and will carry their souls back to shore if they

lose their lives at sea. Jack feels that the whale somehow protects this little town even until today. Dotted on the whale, almost like old barnacles on a ship, are buildings and temples that particularly took his eye while walking around the town. The assembly halls, the French colonial buildings, the old cinema, the sports stadium and particular shops are illustrated in their location in the map. ■

This digitally-colored print (giclee prints on cotton paper, 69 x 48cm, USD485), taken from Jack's original ink illustration has been printed in a limited edition of only 10. At the time of writing, the first two have already been sold. To buy your own copy, visit www.marchgallery-hoian.com

Pet of the Month



Images by **Sawano Newell**



Ace and Leah



Ace



Leah



Phoebe

Meet ARC's Newest Puppies!

PHOEBE, ACE AND LEAH ARE two sisters and a brother. They were recently rescued from a sad situation, along with a sibling that was adopted before the litter came to ARC. The puppies are sweet, funny, love life, and are available for adoption now.

These special puppies were born with a genetic hip condition that prevents the hip bones from fitting properly in their sockets. The condition leads to hyper flexibility, which gives the puppies an unusual gait, but doesn't prevent them from walking or running. To see their cute hoppy gait, visit the

ARC Instagram page where there is a video of Phoebe walking off leash.

The three puppies currently need a few minutes of physiotherapy each day to strengthen their hip joints, and an ARC staff member can show their adopters the routine. The best therapy for Phoebe, Ace and Leah is swimming, which strengthens their hips and legs, allowing them to walk more easily. The ideal adoption situation for each puppy would be into a household with a pool where he or she could get regular exercise. Currently, their condition isn't causing the puppies any pain, but it

could lead to hip pain as they age, so at some point pain medications might be necessary.

These three pups are 12 weeks old and have had their first round of vaccinations. They are friendly toward people and other dogs and are at the perfect age to bond with a forever family. In general, these are puppies who are happy, healthy other than their hip issue, interested in the world around them, and just as silly as puppies that walk without a funny gait. ■

If you would like to adopt Phoebe, Ace or Leah, please send an email to arcpets@gmail.com. In addition to puppy adopters, they are looking for puppy and kitten fosters. Also, please consider donating to ARC so that they can continue their work of saving the lives of needy cats and dogs in Saigon.



Riding in
Cars
with *Women*

K&K Fashion (www.kkfashion.vn) combines unique color combinations with high-quality materials and sophisticated sewing techniques to help flatter the glamorous curves of any woman.







Entrepreneurs







From a Virtual Restaurant to Your Dining Table

No longer must restaurateurs rent space for a dining room to serve diners, *Oi* speaks to Rukmini Makkar about her new business

Interview by **Christine Van** - Images Provided by **FEURO**

What inspired you to start FEURO, and what does "FEURO" mean?

Saigon is a vibrant melting pot of cultures, and has a wide array of delicious cuisines to offer, the founders too are avid foodies with a passion for fine cuisine. While it is both refreshing and enjoyable to visit a restaurant, gourmet food comes with a price tag.

On the other hand, the pace at which our lives are transforming with longer working hours, rising cost of living and perhaps smaller disposable incomes.

We want to offer consumers the option of being served gourmet food, using the finest quality and freshest ingredients, through a seamless delivery experience all while being gentle on the pocket.

FEURO is the "first ever virtual restaurant in Vietnam" and you can have the food delivered at your home, office or even at your favorite pop-up bar.

We offer modern European cuisine and, therefore, the word itself has been derived from "food" and "Europe". It represents the finest quality, freshest



ingredients, lots of creativity for a modern appeal, with good value for money.

Can you tell us more about your chef, Milan Lam?

Our Executive Chef Milan Lam has 10 years experience working in France and Vietnam, although young, he is very driven and creates some of the most delightful dishes. Before joining FEURO, he was working at La Grande Cascade, a



one-star Michelin restaurant in Paris. He was also the opening chef for, what are now some of the most popular restaurants in Saigon, Marcel Burger and Poke Saigon.

It is inspiring to see him strive hard every single day to perfect the art. Though he believes, perfection is not the final destination, it is a constant work in progress.

From where are the ingredients sourced?

"Farm to Table" is our mantra as far as ingredient sourcing is concerned, as we use the freshest quality and safest ingredients available in Vietnam. We work with multiple quality suppliers, one of which is Kamerau. Since we are a virtual restaurant and don't have typical overheads as a regular restaurant, our focus is solely food quality and preparation, leave the consumer feeling content, assured and valued.

Explain how ordering from FEURO is different from ordering from food delivery apps that list many different restaurants.

Food delivery apps are very important for the continued success of the food and beverage industry in the world as they are aggregators. We are working with a few of them as well, such as NOW, Baemin and Grab, they have a very broad reach and can get us connected with our audience.

At FEURO, we offer the option to consumers to order directly with us, which allows us to ensure a seamless customer experience, from the moment an order is placed through our hassle-free online ordering systems, to the time the food is delivered to your doorstep, our friendly customer service staff

check with the driver every 10 minutes to ensure they are on track. We aim to deliver the food within 30 minutes from the time the order is placed in Thao Dien and within 40 minutes for central D1 and D2.

Why is the focus just on European food? Will you expand to Asian cuisine soon?

Focus is on Modern European cuisine as that is where we see an opportunity to offer something new and interesting to our clients, we are not a French, Italian, German or Dutch restaurant. Rather, we offer an assortment of popular dishes from across Europe with an interesting FEURO twist to it.

In the future we would love to provide our consumers with more interesting options, that will be determined by what consumers want.

How often do you change the menu?

We launched about 2 weeks ago with a full menu assortment. However, we offer specials of the week based on the freshest ingredients we can source, for example, one of our specials last week was spinach ravioli stuffed with feta cheese.

Our menu is never constant, we are continuously working to introduce new dishes to adapt to seasonal tastes and consumer preferences.

What kind of reactions have you been receiving from customers?

Customer feedback have been very heartening and positive. We have received lots of great reviews on the quality of the food, freshness and great taste. Everyone appreciates the bio-degradable packaging and the branding that it comes with, our smooth delivery experience as well as the great value for their money. ■

For more info, visit <https://www.facebook.com/feurofoodsgn>



Milan Lam



Kitchen

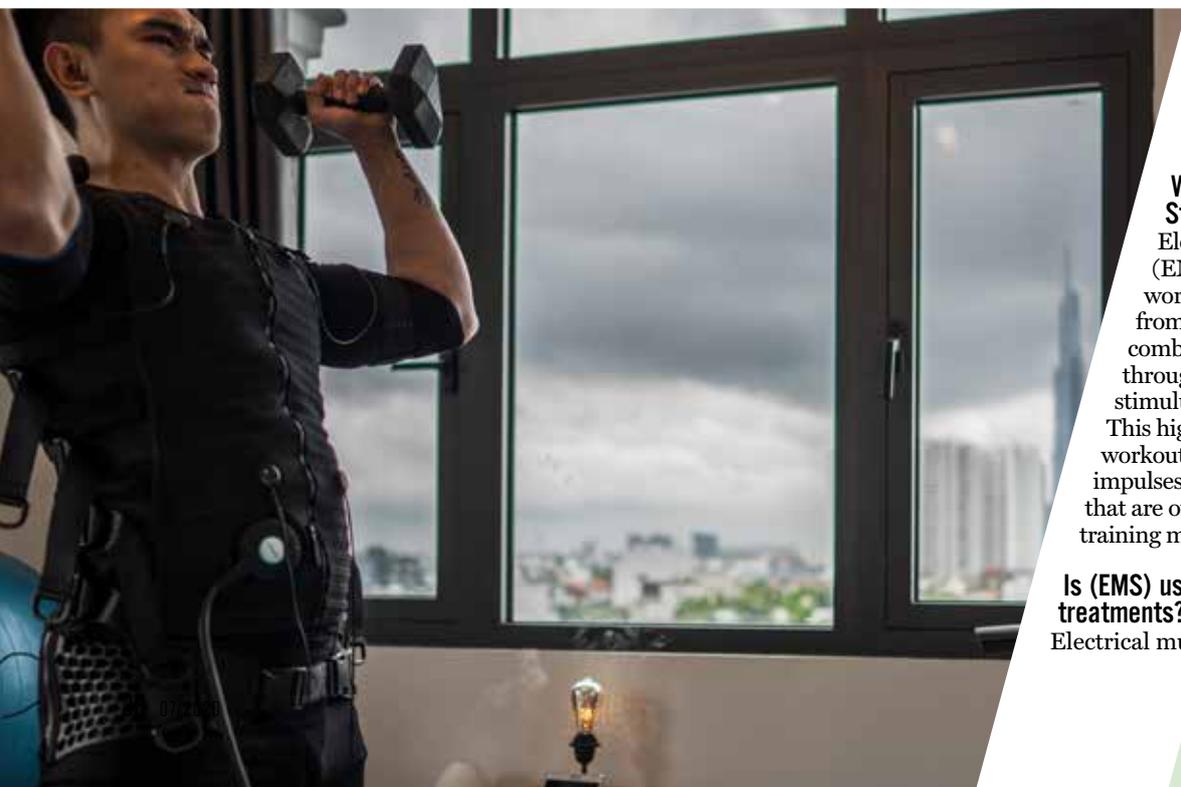


Packaging



ELECTRIC YOUTH

Oi speaks to Celine Ventalon about Miha Bodytec and EMS training in Saigon



Interview by **Christine Van**
Images Provided by
Miha Bodytec Saigon

What is Electric Muscle Stimulator (EMS)?

Electrical Muscle Stimulation (EMS) training is a full-body workout that originally comes from a physiotherapy and combines a 'free will contraction' through an exercise and an external stimulus from an EMS device. This high-intense whole-body workout uses low-frequency electrical impulses to stimulate those muscles that are often ignored by conventional training methods.

Is (EMS) used for medical or cosmetic treatments?

Electrical muscle stimulation is used



in order to strengthen weak muscles, reduce swelling, relieve pain and help heal wounds such as back pain, joint pain, arthritis, muscle conditioning (mostly for athletes), muscle injury from trauma or disease, spine injury, etc. EMS training can also help to eliminate toxins that can cause cellulite. EMS training stimulates blood flow and increases the production of collagen. These factors can give the skin a smoother appearance. EMS training can help to tone muscles and improve body definition more effectively than conventional training methods, causing significant effects on decreasing waist circumference, abdominal obesity, subcutaneous fat mass, and body fat percentage.

What medical conditions are treated with EMS?

EMS can be used both as a therapy or training. It remains a crucial tool in the treatment of numerous acute and

chronic pain conditions. Miha Bodytec also concentrates on the fitness and beauty aspects: body shaping and toning through muscle formation and fat reduction, stimulation of connective tissue metabolism and stimulating blood circulation.

How does EMS work?

In order to better practice electrostimulation, you must place electrodes above the vest and bands on your arms and connect it to a special device called Miha Bodytec. The Miha Bodytec device encourages users to work through a series of exercises. As they do so, the device sends a free will contraction to activate the user's agonist and antagonist muscles at the same time, strengthening deep-seated muscle groups that are usually hard to target. This results in higher

recruitment of muscle fibers without any additional load on the joints through weights.

How is it possible to stimulate a muscle electrically from the skin?

The muscular type of electric stimulation seeks to strengthen the muscles by reducing muscle spasms. This stimulates the skeletal muscle using electric impulses to cause muscle contraction. EMS is commonly used to help with chronic pain.

Is there an age minimum or limit to use EMS?

The minimum age for using the machinery is 16, and there is no upper age limit. Seniors use it to preserve their tone, their vitality and their shape.

Should a person avoid Electro Muscle Stimulation if they have certain health conditions?

Unfortunately, trainees with pacemakers, implanted defibrillators or are pregnant are deemed unsuitable for EMS-therapy or EMS-training.

Is EMS Suitable for Post-Natal Training?

Training with EMS is an excellent way to reshape the body after childbirth and it can be done a few weeks after childbirth depending on the medical recommendation from a doctor. After that, EMS is excellent for regression and body firming.

Will there be a trainer with every session at Miha?

Studio Miha Saigon provides a professional personal trainer for every session on Miha. Our trainers are well-trained on Miha Bodytec and will increase the intensity of the stimulation based on the member's fitness capabilities, goals and body's response.

How long does it take before a person can see results?

First changes can usually be seen after four sessions, depending on lifestyle. After 12 sessions such results are usually witnessed: 9% body fat loss, 30% increase in strength, 89% of users feel stronger and fitter.

How much does a session cost, and how long is each session?

Our concept is to train on a Miha Bodytec machine with a personal trainer in a private and cozy apartment where no one can see you train and far from the crowd of a gym. Our first package is the 24-session package and costs VND22.9 million. It includes 24 private sessions on Miha with a personal trainer, a private bathroom with a Vitamin C shower that's heavy metals free, towels, use of a sauna, a rooftop pool, and a warm-up room with a treadmill and exercise bike.

Each session of 25 minutes is equal to 4 hours of regular training. ■

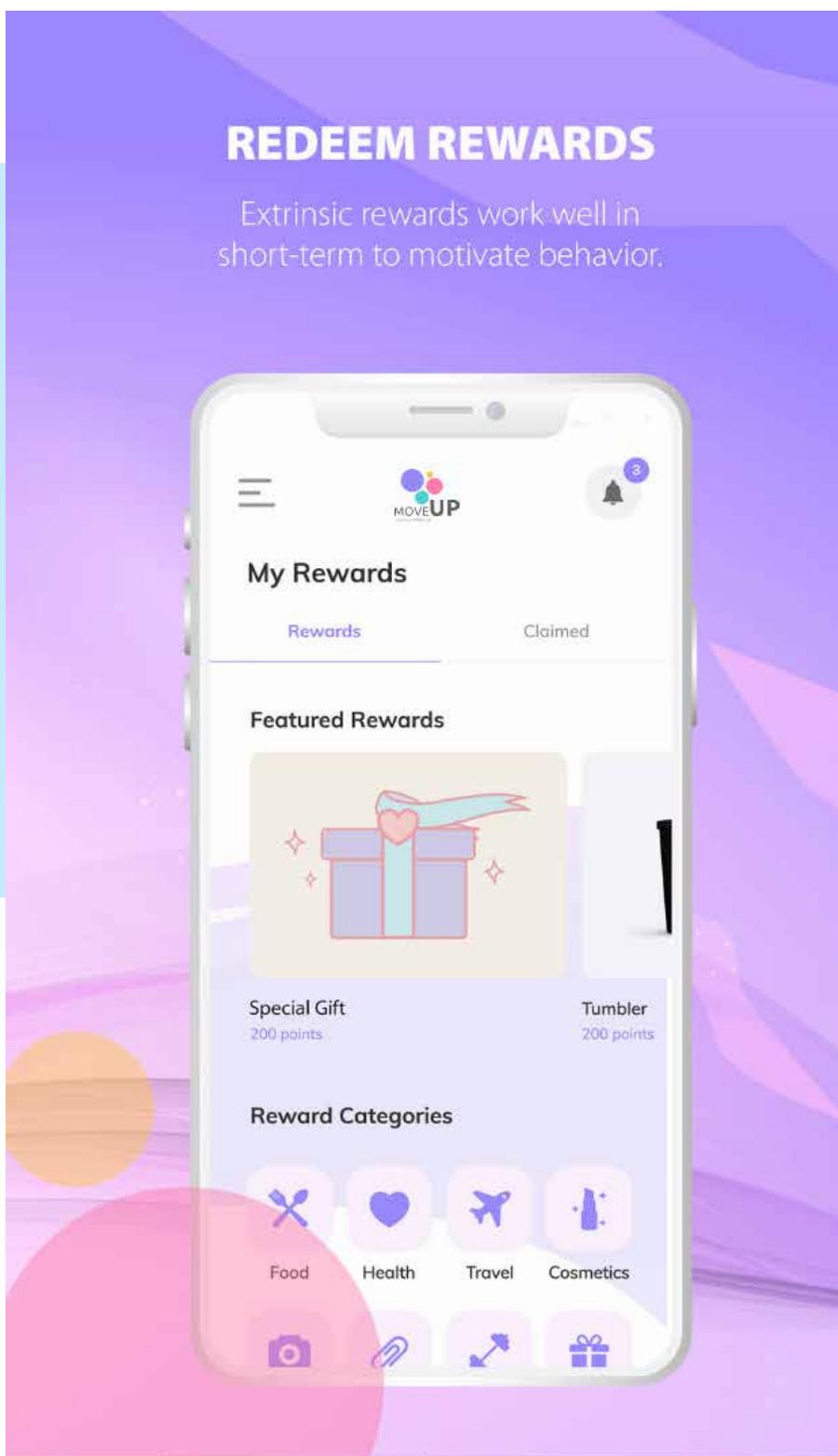
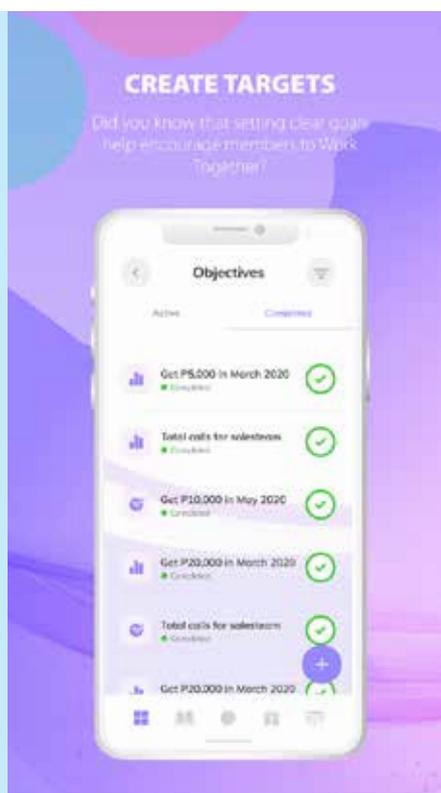
For more info, visit www.facebook.com/mihabodytecsaigon

SHARIED

KNOWLEDGE

The spirit of connectedness and increased knowledge for increased knowledge sharing that animates UpLearn

Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez



“NEVER LET A GOOD CRISIS go to waste,” goes the now-famous quote by former Obama advisor Rahm Emanuel. The quote seems tailored to this moment, this very one where “crisis” seems to be in abundance.

The rest of it—well, where might one find the opportunity promised amid the chaos, the separated, the sudden moment where everyone is alone in their homes yet together online with the same big, dark thing on our minds? To be a human is to feel that first, perhaps.

Serial tech entrepreneur Paul Espinas probably first felt the severity of the moment not as a successful founder and CEO, but as a son and a neighbor. Step back to early 2020 amid the sudden pandemic. All at once, it seemed like everything was changing in a flash, a change that’s hard to appreciate the size and scale of without getting into the

granular and remote. In Espinas' native Ticao Island in north central Philippines, this 334-square-kilometer island suddenly found itself without access to food and basic necessities because the lockdown restricted the inbound shipments that usually brought necessary household goods to the island.

Phone calls to his family there showed that personal shipments of essential goods using private vehicles might be possible but it would also be capital intensive (read: expensive and paid in cash). Espinas quickly cobbled together a group of webinars on COVID-19 impacts to business, which were offered while passing the digital hat: donation accepted from those able.

Be that because of the sudden teleconferencing of everything in corona time or because of Paul's bonafides, the conferences were a hit. "We were



UpLearn app: "Hey, let's learn something new today," Espinas exclaimed.

UpLearn is like other MOOC platforms like Udemy in that both are knowledge sharing hubs. But Espinas and Duncan's app differs in a number of areas. A mobile-centered design makes this a small screen-specialized experience. Time is also treated much more differently in UpLearn: the app serves education in bite-sized, three to five minute segments.

It's made to "consume on the go," Duncan explained. The app is designed to make users "more likely to interact with and understand the content." Much of the recorded lectures that Espinas created in that first cycle of webinars ended up being UpLearn's initial offerings: topics include COVID-19 and recruitment, remote work management and the pandemic's change on demand for Filipino talent abroad.

Users can take courses and check in with their friends to see what they're learning about too. "On my newsfeed I'll get updates from Paul" and other colleagues and friends. UpLearn as a platform can be repurposed in to company specific learning programs to deploy modules specific to an individual firm.

UpLearn will weave in nice perks like a motorbike giveaway for users later as the app user base grows, but the people on the app itself are a big part of what make the app a meeting point for a learning community over another learning platform like Udemy. Duncan and Espinas decided early on that a social aspect to UpLearn would be a big edge for keeping the users they win. "It's not about acquiring users. It's about retaining the users," Duncan said.

The app launched on the Android store on a limited basis in March. The public launch happened in June. The team reportedly serves about 2,000 learners at the moment. Two content streams will bring online more classes: in house, professional production of high quality videos (think premium learning service MasterClass) and recordings of webinars, which will be trimmed down to fit into the platform's "micro learning"-centered approach.

Espinas is a man seemingly always on the go. He and Duncan met with *Oi* for a quick serving of Thai food before he was get to meet with a Canadian businessperson he hoped to connect with and have be a speaker on the app. In his own work, Espinas said he has interactions with people all the time where he's picking up important tips and insights. To snag what's coming at him, Espinas walks in to his conversations with paper and pen to take notes.

It's this spirit of connectedness and increased knowledge for increased knowledge sharing that animates UpLearn. "The goal is to have more (classes)," Espinas said. "There's so many things that people can learn from each other." ■

For more info, visit www.facebook.com/upupappasia/

web-based education was clearly there as they were seeing in Espinas' webinars.

He and Duncan put their collective talents to work posing a series of questions to suss out the cause of and perhaps leverage the interest they were seeing in the webinars. The conferences were recorded; what if the team was able to repurpose the footage into smaller, more digestible bits that could be consumed serially? What if these learning modules could all live on a platform where education wasn't separated into classes but channels of related topics and communities of like minds?

Thus was born the learning app UpLearn.

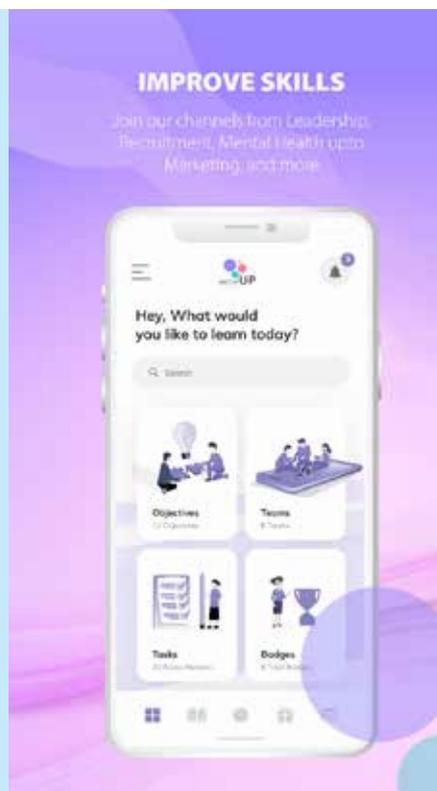
The pitch: say you're on a subway or in a taxi on your way to your next thing. That's not enough time for a full recorded lecture, more than a few pages of reading or really anything other than a harmless, low value use of your disposable time on social media, Espinas said. And then, the "ping" of a notification from the



getting up to 1,000 views per webinar," Espinas said. The project seemed special for Espinas who is in his third year leading the team behind UpUpApp, a mobile performance based management software with a strong focus on learning and development. But the app is more accurately described as a gamified KPI dashboard, the "game" is your work and the "points" are given for doing more of it on time.

What Espinas was doing with the webinars more closely mirrored something like the Masterclass web teaching series or the online courses on Udemy or Coursera, products that have great intention that don't always rise above the category of "things I should do but don't."

"I've started plenty of courses on Udemy and Coursera," Espinas' associate Jamie Duncan said. "How many have I finished? Zero." Yet, the interest for



Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Escape Lounge and Rooftop

Escape Lounge and Rooftop, a new stylish, sophisticated lounge in Thao Dien is a reminder of the time when flying was elegant and romantic. You can enjoy the view from their rooftop surrounded by palm trees, bamboo, murals, relaxing music, all in a vacation atmosphere. Escape serves tropical cocktails, spirits, great food, and Saigon's best craft beers.
11 Thao Dien Street, Thao Dien District 2
083 827 9179/escapelounge.vn



Also Try...

Air 360 Sky Lounge - Events

This rooftop bar combines vibrant music, fancy designs and 360 degree view of Saigon's skyline to make it one of the best spots for drinks, lounging and events.
0974 58 77 88
136-138 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1
www.air360skybar.com

Broma Saigon Bar

Famously known for 'not being a bar' Broma is one of Ho Chi Minh City's most popular hangouts with prices ranging from VND30,000 – VND500,000. Broma is a more upscale option for those wishing to escape the cheap drinks in The Pham.
41 Nguyen Hue, D1

Chill Skybar - Dining

A modern lounge, bar and dining space that is considered the first "skybar" concept in Vietnam. It is perched on top of AB Tower, exclusively on the 26th and 27th floor with views of the city's skyline
0938 822 838
Level 26, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
www.chillsaigon.com

Eon Helibar

This cosmopolitan nightspot is an ideal venue for a vibrant night out with live acoustic performances and DJ's spinning nightly, EON Helibar has a non-smoking section. Rental of the entire restaurant for larger functions is also available.
Level 52, 2 Hai Trieu, Ward Ben Nghe, District 1

Shri Rooftop Bar & Restaurant

Shri Rooftop Bar & Restaurant at Centec Tower overlooks some of Ho Chi Minh's top attractions, including Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, Kumho Plaza, and Lotus Building, as well as the Phu My Suspension Bridge over Saigon River. Open all day, you can savour modern European and Vietnamese fare at the indoor dining area before enjoying the rest of the night at the rooftop bar and lounge.
Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai

Social Club Rooftop Bar

Part of the Hôtel des Arts Saigon, Social Club Rooftop Bar is a great place to overlook Saigon's glittering skyline sipping on a cocktail and unwinding. Things become more vibrant with the ambient music and DJs at sunset. Social Club Rooftop Bar has the highest rooftop infinity pool in the city.
76 - 78 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Dist.3
Tel: (+84) 28 3989 8888

Saigon Saigon Bar

This iconic bar is a great place to watch the sun go down over the lights of the city and relax with friends. Live entertainment nightly, including their resident Cuban band, Q'vans from 9pm Wednesday to Monday.
19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
(028) 3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com
11am till late

Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

Set on the fifth floor, Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar makes up for its modest height with breath-taking views of Vietnam's French colonial structures such as Saigon Opera House and People's Committee Hall. Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar is also fitted with an elevated stage and dancefloor, hosting live Latino bands and salsa performances at 20:00 onwards.
141 Nguyen Hue, D1

MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



Pasteur Street Brewing

Pasteur Street Brewing incorporates American brewing techniques with fresh and exotic Vietnamese ingredients to create amazing craft beers. Named after the first Taproom's location, the company has since expanded into one of the largest craft beer brands in the country.
The Original Taproom: 144-144/3 Pasteur Street, Ben Nghe, Dist.1
Le Thanh Ton Taproom: 26A Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe, Dist.1
Thao Dien Taproom: 120 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, Dist.2
Hoi An Ancient Town Taproom: 100 Bach Dang, Hoi An
Hoan Kiem Taproom: 1 Au Trieu, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi.

Also Try...

BiaCraft

BiaCraft is renowned for its extensive selection of craft beers. The back to basics décor only serves to enhance the laidback ambience which BiaCraft prides itself on.
90 Xuan Thuy, D2

East West Brewery

Saigon's Local microbrewery located in the heart of District 1, HCMC. Offering a taproom, restaurant, and rooftop beer garden where customers can enjoy local brews and food crafted with ingredients from the East to the West.
181-185 Ly Tu Trong St. District 1, HCMC **091 306 07 28**
booking@eastwestbrewing.vn
www.eastwestbrewing.vn
facebook.com/eastwestbrewery

Lê La Saigon

Set in a vintage-retro style décor, this open-air oasis on city's liveliest corridor offers coffee in the morning, vietnamese and western cuisine from a renowned local chef in the evening, and live music welcoming guests from around the world nightly. Cafe- Restaurant starts 10AM, everyday live music starts at 9PM.
138 Le Lai street, D1, HCMC.
090 816 61 38
FB: Lelabarpape

Rehab Station

Gastropub in a lovely quiet alley, serves Asian fusion food, 15 kind of different craft beer from most of the popular breweries in Vietnam, along with 60+ imported bottle beers, mostly from Belgium.
02839118229 **hello@rehabstation.com.vn**
facebook.com/rehabstationsg/

Winking Seal

CAFÉS

Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1

K.Coffee

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

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

Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.cafेरunam.com

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 cà phê sữa da served here.

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4

FRENCH

Le Jardin

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

31 Thai Van Lung, D1

Le Bacoulos

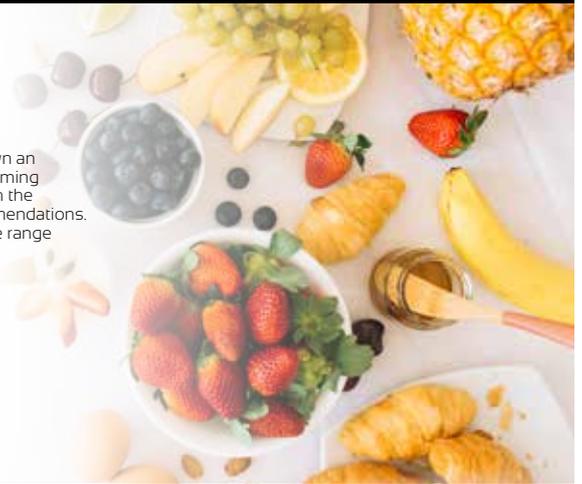
Le Bacoulos is a French restaurant, bar and lounge that serves French cuisine, bar food like burgers, fish and chips alongside vegetarian options like spinach soup and Greek salad. There's also a garden to unwind in with a glass of wine.

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
028 3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com

Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1 - www.tycozsaigon.com



ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

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

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

Ciao Bella

Also Try...

Casa Italia

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

86 Le Loi, D1
028 3824 4286

Carpaccio

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

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

La Forchetta

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

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
028 3541 1006

Italian Trattoria Oggi

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

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

Opera

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an authentic Italian dining experience open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try their famous lasagna and tiramisu. Head chef Heath Gordon learned his craft in a number of Michelin-star restaurants throughout different regions of Italy during a 14 year career. Dine on the deck alfresco or inside in air conditioned comfort.

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pasta Fresca

Hidden on a rooftop in District 1, in a secret garden in District 2 and now also found in District 3, Pasta Fresca offer vegetarian friendly pastas.

Address 1: 28 Thao Dien Street, Thao Dien, District 2
Address 2: 13/1 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1

Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spurned a sister eatery in District 2. Set off the street in a peaceful garden with indoor and outdoor eating areas, separate bar and function area, it offers a wide-ranging Italian menu and monthly movie nights.

87 Nguyen Hue, D1
028 3821 8181

Pizza 4P's

It's too late to call this Saigon's best-kept secret: the word is out. Wander up to the end of its little hem off Le Thanh Ton for the most unique pizza experience in the entire country – sublime Italian pizza pies with a Japanese twist. Toppings like you wouldn't imagine and a venue you'll be glad you took the time to seek out.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 0789 4444
www.pizza4ps.com

INTERNATIONAL



Kiba Saigon

In one of Saigon's trendiest areas, the area south of Ben Thanh Market in District 1, sits fusion tapas restaurant Kiba. Occupying two floors and a large terrace above a street-level wine shop, Kiba serves marvelous, original cuisine with Spanish and Asian influences, in a stylish and comfortable space.

31 Pho Duc Chinh, Nguyen Thai Binh Ward, District 1, HCMC
www.facebook.com/kibasaigon/
038 407 2893



L'Adresse Bistro

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

2 Phan Van Dang, Vista Verde, District 2.
+84906707900 ladressebistro.onuniverse.com
Insta & FB @ladressebistrosn



Tomatito Saigon

Tomatito won the award for Best Restaurant of Saigon 2018. This sexy tapas bar is Chef Willy's casual interpretation of the prêt-à-porter concept. Willy has a very personal perception of style, that is reflected in all his creations. His universe is colorful, funky and eclectic.

1st Floor, 171 Calmette, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City
www.tomatito.vn
www.facebook.com/tomatitosaiagon
+84 869 388 864



Saffron

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

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
(0)28 3824 8358

Also Try...

Blanc Restaurant

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

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1 - 02862663535
www.blancrestaurant.vn

Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

Manzo means "Beef" in Italian and as the name implies, it's a "Meat Bar". Manzo also offers several different dishes matched with local craft beer and selected wines, set in a classic European bar atmosphere. Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar was established in the heart of HCMC on Le Thanh Ton Street in District 1.

17/13 and 17/14 Le Thanh Ton street, District 1, HCMC
028-2253-8825 www.butcher-manzo.com

FORK Restaurant

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

15 Dong Du, D1 - 028 3823 3597
info@forksaigon.com www.forksaigon.com

Noir - Dining in the Dark

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

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1
02862632525 www.noirdininginthedark.com

Madcow Wine & Grill

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

30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre
(0)28 3838 8686

twenty21one

A new casual dining venue with an innovative tapas menu divided into two categories: Looking East, and Looking West, with dishes such as Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese. There are two dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs are tables with both private and exposed positioning (open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3

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

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



KOREAN

Galbi Brothers

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

R1-25 Hung Phuoc 4, Pham Van Nghi – Bac, D7
5410 6210

Seoul House

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

33 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4297

THAI

Koh Thai

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

Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1
028 3823 4423

Lac Thai

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

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

Thai Street

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

32 Tran Ngoc Dien Road, Thao Dien, D2
028 6654 9525

The Racha Room

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

12-14 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
090 879 1412

Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

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

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

VIETNAMESE



Ngoc Chau Garden

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

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

Ben Thanh Streetfood Market

Located in the city center there is a food court filled with dishes from all over the world, cooked by indigenous people, at affordable prices. Open most of the day and night, Ben Thanh Street Food Market offers live music on Tuesdays and Saturday night.

26 - 28 - 30 Thu Khoa Huan, Ben Thanh Dist, W 1, HCMC
0901 26 28 30

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

Instagram: benthanhstreetfoodmarket

Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

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

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

Cuc Cach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1
028 3848 0144

Five Oysters

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

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

Hum

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

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

May

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

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277

Mountain Retreat

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

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

Nha Hang Ngon

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

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

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

Temple Club

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

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

The Hue House

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

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

Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

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

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
028 3821 1631

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46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1



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

Behind the Label

Is French wine about to hit bottom?

FRANCE HAS THE WORLDWIDE reputation for producing the best, and usually, the most expensive wines in the world.

The five first growths of Bordeaux, also known as the Grand Crus, even though they are mass produced in the hundreds of thousands of bottles, easily reach astronomic prices around USD1,000 a bottle. Are they good? Yes, they are fantastic in fact. Are they worth that money, not for me, and not for most, but many who want to speculate buy them by the case, and some nouveau riche Chinese buy them to show off.

The same applies to many of Burgundy's wines, also in France, but in this case with small production, the wines are gorgeous but still truly overpriced.

These fabulous wines and their reputation has helped France and French wines to be highly appreciated all over the world, even though most of the French wines sold in and out of France are on the low-end of both price and quality.

Many people are willing to pay more just because a bottle of wine is made in France, and even more if it says "Chateau", "Bordeaux" or "Burgundy", not that any of these would guarantee that the wine is good or even acceptable.

Thanks to this, many French

wineries, that had little much to do other than make very visible where their wines came from, have been relaxing regarding the quality of their wines and innovation, as a result for the last 2-3 days the quality of common Bordeaux wines has been coming down, and the same applies to other French regions. How long is this going to continue?

Not much longer. Wine drinkers in Asia, which is where the demand for French wine has been the highest over the last decade, are getting more educated and they are able to distinguish good wine from nice words in labels. They are also traveling a lot and being exposed to great wines at great prices

(Spain and Italy being the winners on this), so they are shifting a good part of their business to these Old World wines.

If that was not enough, wineries in the New World are innovating and making better and better wines each day. Bordeaux taste is no longer exclusive of Bordeaux, with some top-end Chilean wineries producing amazing wines at a fraction of the cost of the grand crus, while beating them in blind tastings.

At the same time, wineries in Australia and New Zealand are producing amazing Pinot Noir, rivalling those of Burgundy, while much cheaper. Is this the end of French wines as we know them? ■

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HOW TO SNAG TRAVEL DEALS

Global pandemic creates travel buyer's market

Tra Su Forest - Image by James Pham

IT FEELS LIKE FOREVER SINCE many of us have used a passport, but while international travel is off the table for now, that doesn't mean it's not a great time to travel.

With the coronavirus situation evolving on a daily basis, health and flexibility are likely to be key factors when weighing travel options. How safe is a destination in general and the property where you'll be staying? And how flexible are the terms in case the situation takes a sudden turn for the worse?

Many properties are drumming up sales even during travel restrictions by offering spectacular deals with no-risk change and cancellation policies on condition of payment up front. **Travel Zoo** is one of my all-time favorite sites curating some of the best deals around, and nearly all of the recent offers come with long lead times and generous cancellation properties.

Earlier this month, I spotted an incredible week-long deal for a 4-star all-inclusive resort in the Maldives at the unheard of price of just USD900 for two. You had to buy the voucher now, but had two full years to use it or get a refund if you weren't able to travel. That has really become the gold standard of travel deals at the moment – slashing prices and mitigating risks to the consumer while generating immediate income for the property at a time when there are little to no guests. Unfortunately, by the time

I was able to round up a group of friends to go (“I can't go until I know I can get back into Vietnam,” said one expat friend before I explained we had two years to use it), the deal was gone. I'm still kicking myself for not jumping on it right away. That's the thing about today's travel deals – companies need money now but once the forecast brightens, those deals will be gone, so it's really best to buy immediately when you see a deal that's almost too good to be true.

Of course, you'll need to weigh the potential risks as well, ie. whether that boutique property or small airline will even be around when you're ready to travel. So best to purchase by credit card because of the protection it offers in case of bankruptcy, and lean towards bigger brands who are more likely to have the resources to weather the COVID storm. You'll also do well to keep tabs on the property and the destination to see how they're faring and book under



Image Courtesy of Victoria Mekong Cruises



Image courtesy of Victoria Chau Doc Hotel



Having visited nearly 70 countries as a travel writer and copywriter, **James Pham** documents his adventures on Instagram at fly.icarus.fly



Image Courtesy of Victoria Mekong Cruises

the most generous cancellation terms possible (remembering to screenshot the cancellation policy at time of purchase).

While planning international travel is a great way to keep the travel itch at bay, we're spoiled to be in Vietnam, one of the safest countries in the world right now. With borders closed indefinitely and most attractions fully open, there are lots of travel opportunities to be had domestically. "Vietnam is an amazing destination right now because it's safe, beautiful, and cheaper than ever," says Nguyen Trung Cong, Director at iVIVU.com, a leading Vietnam-based online hotel and tour booking website serving mainly domestic customers. "After a long time of 'rest,' Nature has had time to recover. There's no need to go far; Vietnam is enough."

"Many customers are still afraid to travel which is why we've only recovered about 70% of our regular business," adds Nguyen. "However, after a period

of social distancing, iVIVU has seen a strong recovery in domestic travel with demand higher than ever. Since June, there's been a steady increase, especially in high-end customers, leading to a 50% growth over the same period."

Nguyen mentions the high-end sector which is where you'll find the biggest savings. With foreign guests and their deep pockets temporarily out of the mix, there's never been a better time to splurge for less. The Vietnam Residents Offer from the luxe **Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai** (look for our review in next month's issue) offers one free villa night for every paid night through August 31, including VND2,200,000 resort credit per bedroom per stay plus 24-hour rolling check in / check out. The **Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa** has ocean view rooms starting at VND2,400,000++ per night including daily breakfast and dinner with a bunch of extra perks as

part of their HOLIDAY package. Both of these aren't just deals, they're steals for the level of luxury you're getting at a fraction of regular prices.

Travel suppliers are also having to reinvent their products originally aimed at international guests to appeal to domestic travelers.

The new **Victoria Mekong Cruises** which started off sailing between Can Tho, Vietnam and Phnom Penh, Cambodia have revamped their itineraries to focus on the Vietnam side only. Shorter cruises of 1 or 2 nights now take in attractions like the incredible submerged Tra Su Cajuput Forest just outside of Chau Doc and the little-visited Long Xuyen Floating Market while offering impressive on-board amenities like a Jacuzzi and state-of-the-art movie theater.

Another travel trend is small group or completely private travel. "Based on our data from user experience personalization using AI technology, we've seen that our customers are looking for private trips, especially now with the COVID-19 pandemic. We've also been organizing private tours for small groups of family and friends," says Nguyen.

For the ultimate social distancing holiday, **Victoria Cruises** is offering an overnight cruise aboard your very own sampan in the Mekong Delta, starting at VND3,300,000 per person, including meals served on the boat and your own English-speaking tour guide.

According to Nguyen, summertime hot spots will still center around beaches including Phu Quoc, Da Nang, Vung Tau, Nha Trang, Quy Nhon, and Phan Thiet. However, if you're looking to escape the crowds, now's the time to do so while borders remain closed. Imagine photographing the streets of Hoi An without 20 tourists in your frame or sailing through majestic Halong Bay in blissful solitude. So if you're lucky enough to be living in Vietnam at the moment, there's really never been a better time to travel! ■

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

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www.laverandaresorts.com

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Vo Nguyen Giap, Khuê My, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang

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www.pullman-danang.com

The Island Lodge

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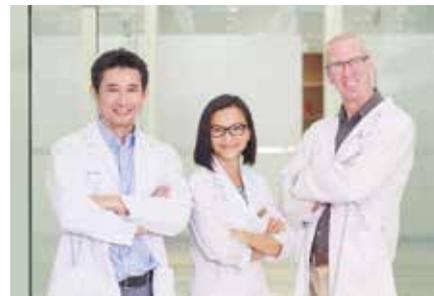
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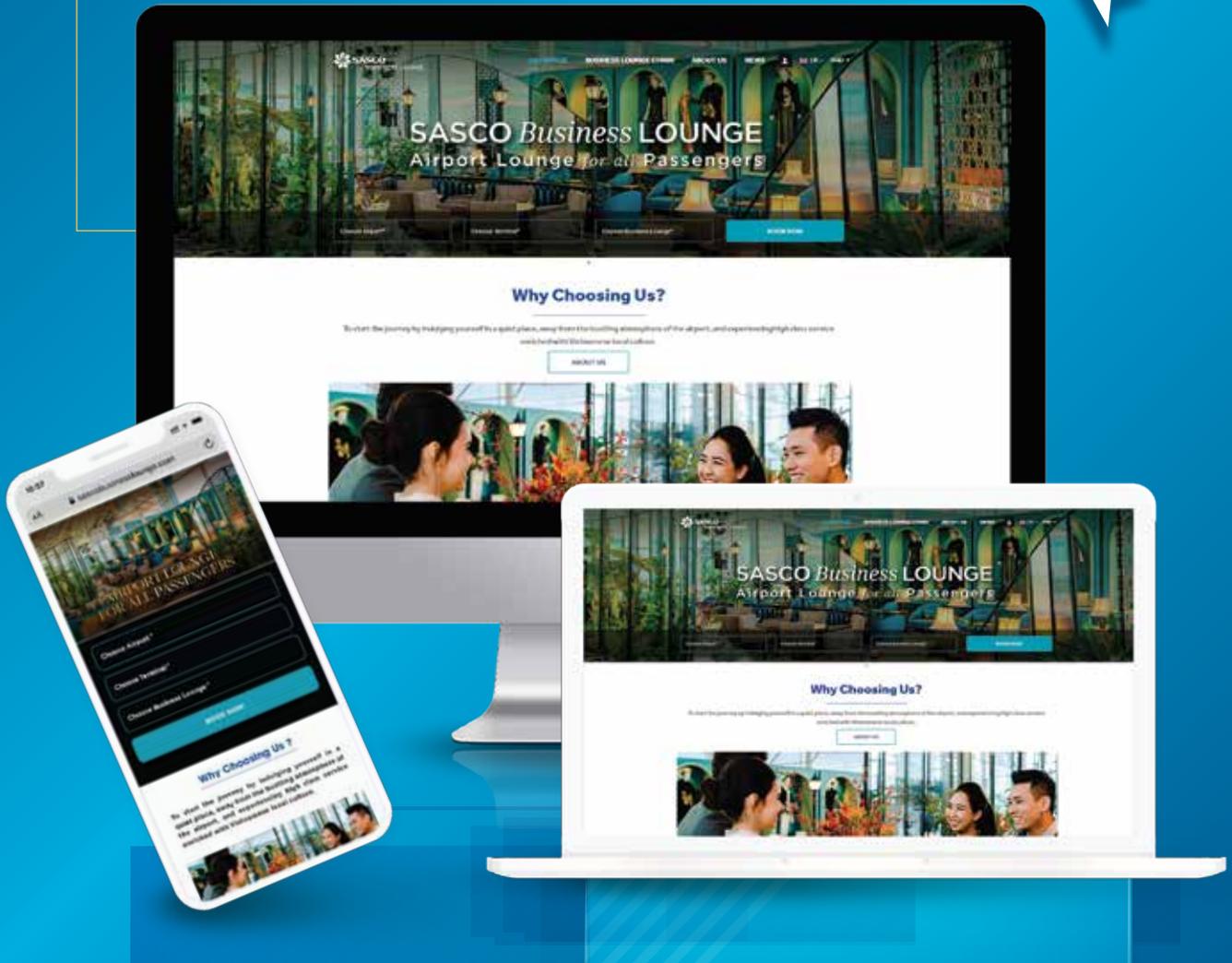
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Kids & Education





7 Helpful Tips for Moms Returning to Work

Text by Erica Sunarjo

RETURNING TO WORK IS A challenge for most new moms. Besides leaving your little one alone for the first time, you also need to face going back to your work routine. Many doubts can start popping in your mind. Thoughts such as "Can I do this?", "Will my child be okay without me?", "Will I be good at my job again?" can trouble everyone. There are so many things you need to work out that it can feel really overwhelming.

However, there is no need for worries. You can have it all, but you need to put some effort into it. Adjustment takes time and you will have to accept that. What can make the transition less worrying and stressful are some useful tips and tricks.

Here is what all moms who are getting back to work need to know.

1. Arm Yourself with Positive Thoughts

No one can tell you that this will be easy. What people can tell you is that your mindset determines the quality of your life. Hardships are a regular part of the life cycle and you need to accept them.

If you are scared to leave your child alone just think about their future. Visualize how proud they will be to have a mother who is giving her best to ensure a good life for them. Your work affects your child's future.

Remember how you were when you were working. Evoke that ambition and desire to earn money for your family.

Remember your job and why you like doing what you do. Yes, you are a mother, but that doesn't mean that your professional passion needs to disaster.

2. Create a Plan

Your lifestyle will certainly change. In order to avoid a big mess, confusion, and impossible schedule, plan ahead.

Figure out what type of job you can return to. Maybe you can consider working from home, or part-time jobs. If not, you should think about searching for a more flexible schedule.

Organize everything you need to keep your child taken care of while you are not around. Planning will minimize the risk of unplanned, stressful situations.



4. Improve Your Skills

Spending time away from work and being focused solely on your child can change your perspective. You might feel that you have fallen behind in the business world. That isn't a reason to doubt yourself. That is a motivation to get out there and empower your skills.

With a variety of online courses, e-books, and industry news, you can catch up on everything in no time. It is essential that you update yourself on any innovations in your niche.

Online courses can help you in different ways. Besides acquiring new skills, you will show your potential employers that you were active during your time off.

5. Write an Impeccable CV and Cover Letter

The first impression is very important. Your first impression on your potential employers will be your CV and cover letter.

Put some effort into writing an amazing CV that will take the attention of your employment gap and direct it towards your expertise. The resume should be up-to-date and the cover letter should emphasize why you are the best fit for that company.

If you need help with transforming your thoughts into well-written content, use writing services like TrustMyPaper or ClassyEssay. It is unacceptable that a CV has writing and grammar errors. To prevent that, use an editing tool like Grammarly.

In case your employment gap was longer, transform that period into a valuable experience. Feel free to add a job title for stay at home parents like Full-time Carer and Household Manager and Full-time Parent. Mention skills that you actively used like:

- Multitasking
- Organizing
- Managing conflict
- Scheduling

6. Activate Your Professional Social Media Profiles

Nowadays, most employers head to the internet to ensure that their potential employees are responsible and presentable. That's why you need to update your professional social media profiles.

LinkedIn can be especially useful during the job search. This network has over 660 million members and it spans over 200 countries. Some employers even browse for employees on this social media platform.

Social media channels are your chance to get back to networking, connect to important people, and find employment.

7. Remember: You Got This!

If you don't believe in yourself, this transition will be much more troublesome. Be persistent, don't give up easily, and don't be so hard on yourself.

Regularly communicate with your family. They are your back up and you'll need someone to talk to from time to time. Find your support group in the people you love the most.

One last tip is to be confident and know your rights. You shouldn't expect discrimination but knowing your right will help you position yourself if you come across it. Go ahead and read Laws Enforced by EEOC to have a better understanding of the current laws. ■
Erica Sunarjo is a professional writer and editor with a Master's degree in Marketing and Social Media. She writes thought-provoking articles for publications in a variety of media. Currently, she works as a content editor at BestEssayEducation and as a writer at Supreme Dissertations. Erica aims to provide people with useful tips that will improve their business and the quality of their life.

Be objective about your possibilities. Stretching yourself too thin will negatively affect each part of your life.

3. Find a Reliable Childcare

A paper on *American Women Workers in Full Employment Economy* says that "quality child care at an affordable price is basic if the working mother is to meet her job responsibilities without neglecting her children." You won't be able to give your best at work if you aren't sure that you are leaving your child at capable hands.

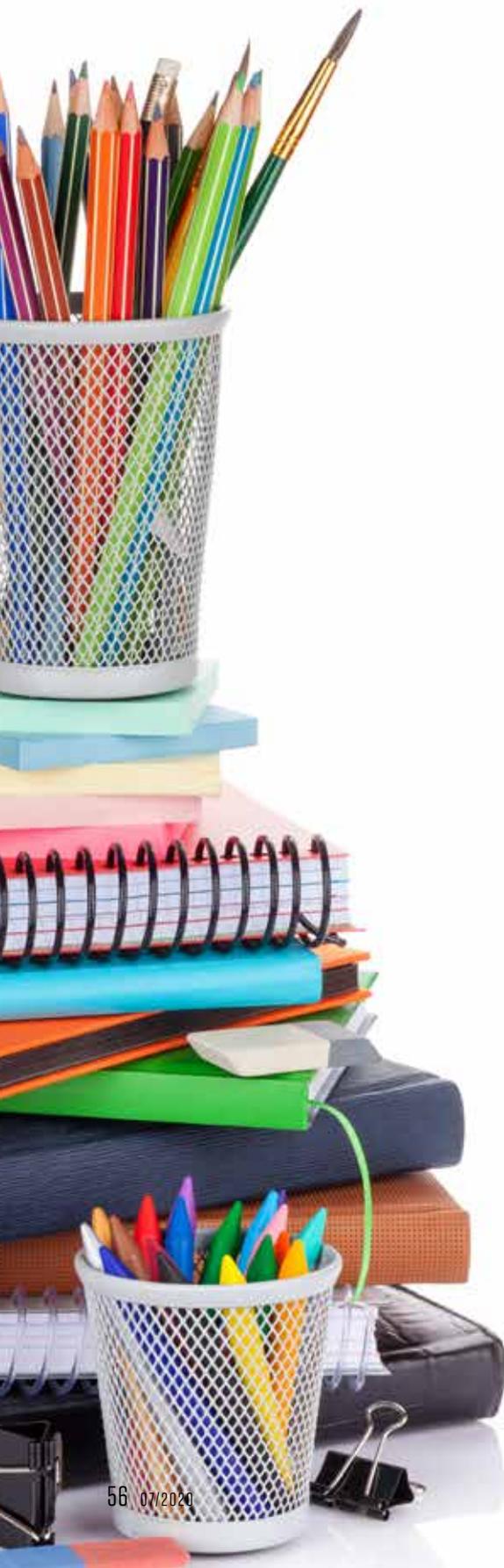
Ask members of your family, friends, or friends' children if they can help you out. It will certainly be more affordable than a professional nanny. However, make sure that the person is responsible enough for this big task.

If your budget allows you to take your child to a daycare, give that a try. There must be at least one daycare near you that is professional and trustworthy.



>> The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



Kinder Academy is a Reggio Emilia approach and STEM concept inspired preschool, where you can find the best integration of the above philosophies and practices.

Our Vision: "Inspire and nurture your child to be a thinker with a global mindset."

Our Mission: "Passionate about the development of your child, we provide the right environment to play, learn and grow. Our team is child centric."

24/2 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, HCMC

Hotline: 0961 825 876 – Tel: 028 22536126

www.kinderacademy.edu.vn

kinderacademy.preschool@gmail.com



SSIS

Saigon South International School is a not-for-profit school providing an American-style education from Early Childhood through Grade 12. SSIS offers AP and IB Diploma, over 80% of our teachers hold advanced degrees, and our students represent 40 nationalities. We are the only Apple Distinguished School in Vietnam, and our state-of-the-art facility sits on a spacious, six-hectare campus.

78 Nguyen Duc Canh Tan Phong Ward, District 7, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

(84-28) 5413-0901

info@ssis.edu.vn

www.ssis.edu.vn



Also Try...

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

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.

Early Years Campus:

5C Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

Primary Campus:

#69, Street No. 3, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

Secondary Campus:

#2, Street No. 9, KDC Tan An Huy, Ap 5, Phuoc Kien, Nha Be, HCMC

Tel: 84 28 5431 1833/34/35/36

Email: office@theabcis.com

www.theabcis.com

Aurora International Preschool Of The Arts

At Aurora, we strive to maximize any valuable opportunities for life-long learning in the Early Years of our children by supporting self-discovery, imagination and creativity. Following the Reggio Emilia-Inspired philosophy, we keep always updating and in continuous tireless research, intertwining with Vietnamese cultural background.

A school inspired by Reggio Emilia

For children from 12 months to 6 years of age

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

028 3744 2991 | 0982 012 860

info@aurorareggio.com | www.aurorareggio.com

www.facebook.com/aurorareggiokindergarten

British International School (BIS)

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

www.bisvietnam.com

International School

Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

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

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

+84 (28) 2222 7788/99

admissions@issp.edu.vn

www.issp.edu.vn

Also Try...

Kids Club Saigon

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

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

The 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
028 3519 2223 / 0903 952 223
admissions@tas.edu.vn
www.tas.edu.vn

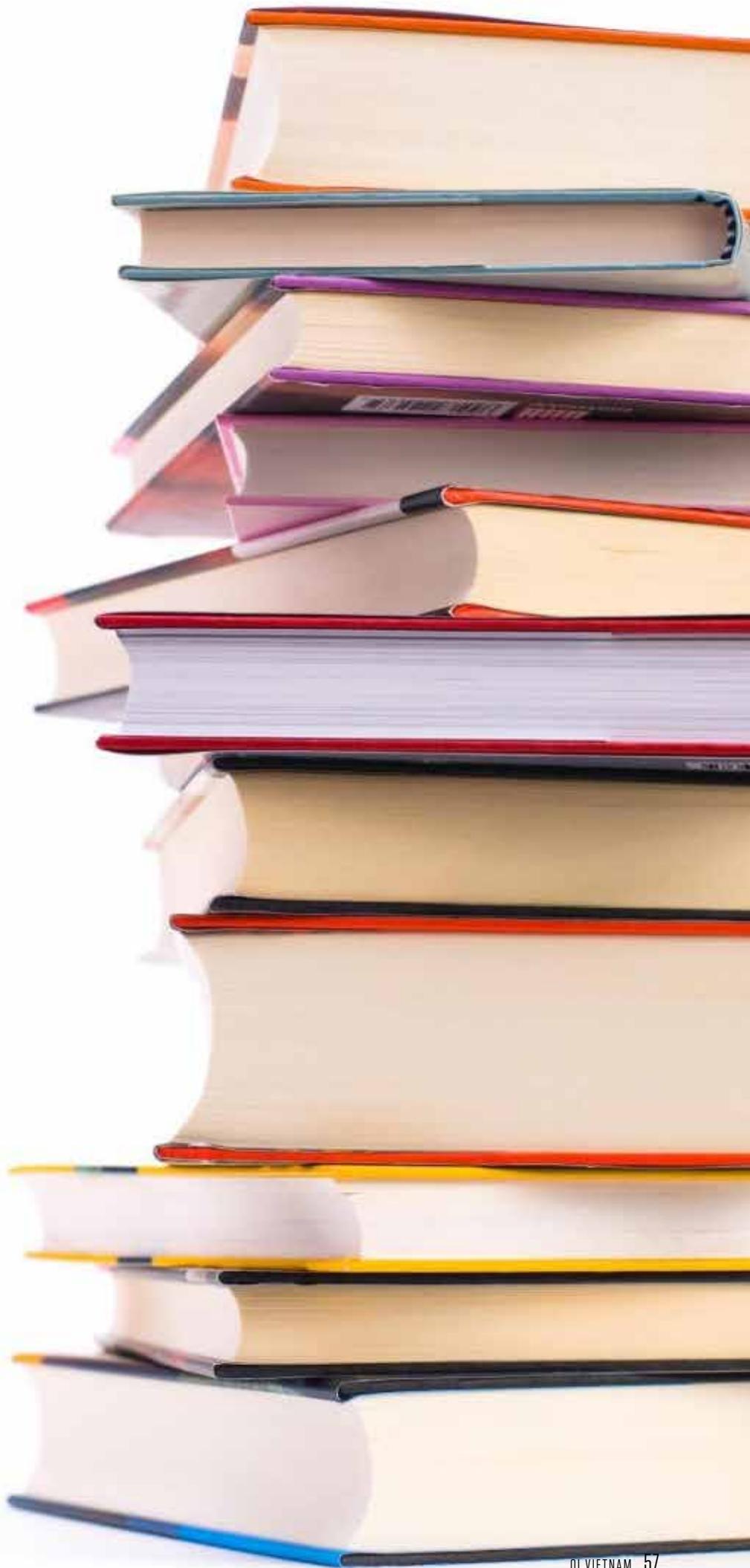
The International School Ho Chi Minh City – American Academy

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

16 Vo Trung Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@aavn.edu.vn
www.aavn.edu.vn

Renaissance International School Saigon

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





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

Website: thelongcaffe.com

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