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VIETNAM

APRIL 2014

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EVERYTHING SACRED**

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Over After

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VIETNAM

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This Month's Cover

Image: Quinn Ryan Mattingly

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Relationships whose foundations are built on cultural differences

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FLOWER BOUQUET BY WWW.VSCENTIAL.COM
IMAGE BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG

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A small island off the southeast coast of Bali, Nusa Lembongan is a tropical landscape surrounded by crystal clear blue waters

A man with dark hair and a mustache is sitting on a traditional wooden boat on a body of water. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a colorful, abstract graphic on the chest and red shorts. The background is a vast, green rice field under a soft, hazy sky at sunset or sunrise. The water reflects the surrounding greenery and the sky.

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"The Vietnamese Village" combines water puppetry and local regional specialties to create a cultural dining experience, while the inventively named Le Bacoulos delivers hearty French fare in District 2



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Editor's Note

ISSUE NO. 13
APRIL 2014

Will You Marry Me?

IT'D BE AN INJUSTICE to call this issue our "Wedding" issue. Because even though every girl dreams of her special day, where she can look like a fairy princess and be – literally – swept off her feet by her Prince Charming, in the end, it's just one day. It's the thousands of days afterwards that make up the "Ever After."

As someone recently engaged to a person of a different culture (he's English, I'm American), I can empathize with the highs and lows of being in a multicultural relationship. When we first met, it *did* feel like he was speaking a different language – cuppa, jumper, bird, knocking shop, I'm going to do one – were all foreign to me. That was until we started dating. Now I find myself saying "cuppa" when I want a spot of tea (which I rarely drank until I met him) or asking for a "jumper" when I'm cold. For my part, I've taught him the American way of pouring maple syrup all over your bacon and pancakes to create a delicious sweet and salty combo. I know it's not for everyone, but learning (and teaching) new things is one of the best things about being in a multicultural relationship. However, we're fortunate in that we speak (variations of) the same language, the building blocks to a relationship based on communication. However, as Michael Arnold writes in *How Google Translates Love*, not all couples share even one language but somehow the language of love is enough. Our cover series continues with a look inside a country wedding, where matrimonial traditions still run strong, and James Pham talks to a member of the *Vietnamese Wife, Western Husband Club*, a cartoonist who has documented with laughter the highs and lows of having a Vietnamese spouse.

Speaking of highs and lows, I've recently experienced them both in Saigon. Even though I've lived here for 10 years, it's so easy to settle into a comfortable lifestyle, gradually losing that wanderlust which brought us all here in the first place. So when I visited Lang Viet, the restaurant cum puppet theater show recently, it was like a cultural shot in the arm. The whimsical show made me feel like a kid again, finding real entertainment value in something that

wasn't digitally enhanced or that required a screen of some sort. It was simply artists performing an age-old craft using basic traditional musical instruments and wooden puppets. The deliciously authentic food afterwards didn't hurt either. Read our review in the Wine & Dining section of the magazine and see if you don't agree.

One of the lows I experienced recently was being the victim of an attempted mugging not too far from the *Oi* office. Just two weeks before, a colleague had her phone brazenly stolen right out of her hoodie pocket as she was traveling by motorbike. I scoffed when friends and neighbors told me that D4 was especially crime-ridden, with a long and dark history. NPĐ Khanh ferrets out the history of the area in her article, *Mistress of Mayhem*, highlighting the roles of two people whose names are linked to D4's nefarious reputation – crime bosses Dung Ha and Nam Cam. I'm sure you'll find it equally fascinating to know how Nam Cam controlled D4 before he was executed, and that it was crime mistress Dung Ha who posthumously brought him down.

And sometimes it takes seeing Saigon through new eyes to make us all appreciate this amazing city in which we live. James Pham talks to Argentinean urban sketcher Jorge Royan, in the article aptly titled, *Nothing Hidden, Everything Sacred*, about how vibrant Saigon is, with life thriving and pulsating on the streets, in plain view.

And finally, we're very excited to be organizing our first of what I hope is many *Oi Reader Contests*. So much of what we write and photograph is for you, our readers, and we felt this contest would be a great way to interact with you, and for you to show us what *you* love about Vietnam. For complete information on how to enter (hint, it's really easy!) and the great prizes up for grabs, see the *Oi* website (www.oivietnam.com) or check us out on Facebook. It's your turn to show us what you've got! ■

CHRISTINE VAN

Managing Editor



HAVING MOVED FROM ITS OLD LOCATION AT BLANCHY'S TASH ON HAI BA TRUNG, **BLANCHY STREET** NOW HAS ITS OWN STAND ALONE LOCATION JUST UP THE ROAD IN SAIGON'S MOST FAMOUS FOODIE DESTINATION, THE REFINERY COURTYARD, OFFERING AUTHENTIC SUSHI AND CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE CUISINE WITH PASSION, FLAIR AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL.

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Datebook

Fill up your calendar with these exciting events



APRIL 15

What: Dance Screening

Where: Snap Café, 32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2; 7:30pm

About: *Every Little Step*, a 2008 American documentary film produced and directed by James Stern and Adam Del Deo, will be shown to those interested in joining the dance community in HCMC. It follows the process of casting the Broadway revival of *A Chorus Line* and explores the history of the award-winning musical, beginning with informal interviews with Broadway dancers conducted by Michael Bennett that served as its basis.

Contact: Call 3519 4490 or email info@dancentervn.com



APRIL 17

What: African jazz soul singer Gasandji

Where: IDECAF (28 Le Thanh Ton, D1), 8pm; tickets cost VND100,000, VND50,000 for students

About: Born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gasandji defies, as a sort of mystery, the sacred dimension of both her music and songs. Her first theatrical experiences happened when she was a dancer-choreographer. Gasandji became famous when she produced her own shows and when she appeared as a guest star for artists such as Lokua, Keziah Jones and Imany.

Gasandji sings mainly of herself. At first sight she does not resemble her music. This Congo-born artist stands out for her rather unconventional haircut; her voice is instead gentle and soft. Her music has been labeled afro-jazz, or afro-soul. She released her self-titled album in 2013 and won the Award « Coup de Cœur Francophone 2013 » of the Academy of Music Charles Cros.

Contact: Call 3520 6863 or email: culturel@consulfrance-hcm.org for more info.



APRIL 19

What: Color Me Run

Where: Phu My Hung, D7; 3pm

About: Color Me Run is a unique combination of a running event and music festival. For the first time in Vietnam, you can experience a 5km run while being splashed from head to toe by colored powder. The fun will be followed by international music artists Kelly Rowland (of Destiny's Child) and Timomatic (top three of *Australia's Got Talent 2011*). Registration fee costs VND400,000.

Contact: Register offline at all Circle K stores in HCMC until April 6 or visit www.colormerun.vn



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APRIL 20

What: Dance Workshop

Where: DanCenter, 53 Nguyen Dang Giai, D2; 9:30am – 12pm

About: Chloe Glemot from the Opera National de Paris School will hold a ballet dance workshop for students for VND200,000 (purchased before April 15) and VND250,000 (at the door). Students are encouraged to wear traditional ballet attire: leotards, tights, leggings, stretch pants and tops. Ballet shoes are available at DanCenter Shop.

Contact: Call 3519 4490 or email info@dancentervn.com



APRIL 26

What: Open Day

Where: European International School (EIS), Thao Dien, D2; 9am-12pm

About: The European International School welcomes all interested parents to come and meet teachers, speak to the principal and see the Science and Technology classrooms or the Early Years Centre and find out why EIS is more than just an ordinary school. EIS offers a supportive and challenging academic education from early years to Grade 12 (K-12). Through its motto “Educating Global Citizens,” the school promotes intercultural understanding and respect, not as an alternative to a sense of national identity, but as an essential part of life in the 21st century.

Contact: Visit www.eishcmc.com or email info@eishcmc.com



APRIL 26

What: ANZAC Friendship Match

Where: Vung Tau

About: The ANZAC Friendship Match between the Vietnam Swans and the Malaysian Warriors aims to promote a strong relationship between Vietnam, Australia, and New Zealand. For the first time in the Swannies’ history there will be three games at the Lord Mayor’s Oval. The first will be a ladies/mixed match, to be followed by the curtain raising Legends vs All Stars Game and the main event, Swans vs the Warriors. Following the match, a McMillan Dinner and Charity Auction will be held at the Imperial Hotel where Alex Jezaulenko will be the guest speaker. Alex is one of the most influential players of the Australian game, being a member of the AFL Team of the Century and an inductee of the Hall of Fame as a Legend.

Pre-booking tickets for the dinner is a must as it is expected to sell out. (Ticket prices will be USD60). There will be buses leaving HCMC on both Thursday (for those who want to travel to attend the Long Tan ANZAC Dawn Service) and Friday leaving the Commonwealth Bank (55 Nguyen Du, District 1).

Contact: Visit www.vietnamswans.com for more info

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APRIL 26 - 27

What: Cycling Tour

Where: HCMC-Dalat

About: Saigonbikecare.com is holding a two-day HCMC-Dalat cycling tour. Day one will be a 140km cycling tour from HCMC to Bao Loc. A bus will take riders out of HCMC to Long Khanh for safety reasons and to avoid heavy traffic. Then all riders will be on saddles and ride to Bao Loc. Day two will be a 120km tour from Bao Loc to Dalat.

Registration fee per rider is USD320 and USD520 if with a spouse, and an additional USD70 for each family member who wants to come along. For those who want to fly back to HCMC, a flight will be arranged for VND1,250,000 per person.

Contact: Call Henry Luong at 091 869 9288 to sign up

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Image provided by Barry Atkinson

APRIL 27

What: Mekong Expeditions Rally

Where: Ho Chi Minh City to Dien Bien Phu

About: Adventure travel operator Mekong Expeditions will stage a cross-country car rally to commemorate and celebrate the 60th anniversary of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in northern Vietnam, and the recent passing of legendary war hero, General Vo Nguyen Giap. The historic car rally will depart HCMC on April 27 and arrive in Dien Bien Phu on May 6. More than 10 vehicles of all ages, shapes and sizes will journey in convoy from HCMC across the border into Cambodia. The convoy will then head northeast into Laos and drive for 11 nights and 12 days. The route will trace the Ho Chi Minh Trail and encompass Indochina, traversing the mighty Mekong River. Teams will comprise of Vietnamese and overseas drivers.

Contact: Email Barry Atkinson at barry@mekong-expeditions.com or visit www.mekong-expeditions.com

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MAY 15-18

What: Mountain Marathon

Where: Sapa, Northern Vietnam

About: The Vietnam Mountain Marathon is holding a running camp to help get participants in shape for the hills. Billed as a social weekend for lovers of mountains and fresh air, this is a chance to run in a fantastic climate at a very special time of year when the rice fields are truly stunning. The camp includes an option to conquer Vietnam's highest peak, Mount Fansipan, in just one day. The full package is USD400 and includes return trains to Sapa, bungalow accommodation at Topas Ecolodge, all meals, and three days of running.

Contact: Call 091 257 8335 or email info@vietnammountainmarathon.com



MAY 31

What: Le Fruit Off-Road Triathlon

Where: Ho Tram Beach, Ba Ria, Vung Tau

About: Le Fruit Triathlon has pledged to become the "Greenest Triathlon." The organizers are implementing green race initiatives to minimize negative impacts on the province and set a standard for environmentally responsible mass participatory athletic events. Around 200 triathletes will compete this year. The race will commence with a tide-assisted sea swim along the coast and continues with a challenging off-road bike course and back run along the 10km beach.

Contact: Register online at lefruittriathlon.tumblr.com or email info@talai-adventure.vn

EDITORIAL

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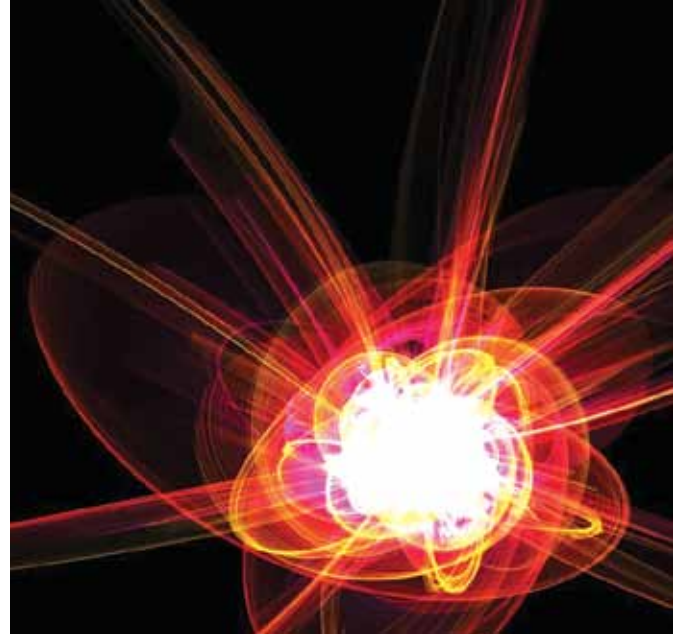
Troi Oi

The country by numbers

61,980



Big Macs were sold in McDonald's first month of operation in Vietnam. The city's first McDonald's has been packed since the day it opened and it's common to see long lines of cars and motorbikes snaking through the drive-thru, also a first in Vietnam. Also, 22,500 customers were served in the first 24 hours of operation.



USD500 MILLION

atomic energy center is being planned by Vietnam and Russia. The Russian government will provide loans for the development of the center, Vyacheslav Pershukov, deputy general director of Rosatom Atomic Energy Group, said last month during a dialogue in Da Lat.

Rosatom Atomic Energy Group and the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology are preparing the necessary conditions for the construction of the center in 2015, Pershukov continued. They have selected the locations and formulated a feasibility plan for the two units – one in Da Lat or its adjacent area, and the other in Hanoi. The center is expected to be completed in 2020 when 400 to 500 Vietnamese and foreign experts will be employed to work at the two units.



7,000

Vietnamese inmates write apology letters to victims. Last month the management board of Thu Duc prison concluded the "Writing Letters of Apology" program launched last year by the Ministry of Public Security at a ceremony in Ham Tan District, Binh Thuan Province.

Almost 90 percent of the total prisoners at Thu Duc took part in the program and wrote letters of apology to their victims, the families of their victims as well as to their parents, spouses, friends and others to seek forgiveness for their crimes.

The apology letters include those from former doctor Tran Anh Huy at Children's Hospital I, located in Ho Chi Minh City, who was given a seven year sentence in 2013 for causing a road accident that killed two people and injured five others in 2011; from Tran Chinh, who was sentenced to 18 years behind bars for murder; and from 20-year-old prisoner Nguyen Thi Hong Loan to her mother for dishonoring her family.

USD81 MILLION

will be used from the Viet Nam Public Utility Telecommunication Service Fund to help poor households replace analogue televisions with digital ones. This is part of the country's plan for television digitalization in which analogue TVs would be eased out in the five biggest cities by 2015, said Deputy Minister of Information and Telecommunication and head of the plan's steering committee Le Nam Thang.

Thang said they are conducting a survey on television usage by households and making a list of beneficiaries who would get support. The beneficiaries include poor and near-poor households and families which get preferential treatment for their contribution to the country's revolution. The disbursement would be in line with the steps being taken to spread digital TV technology. The ministry also recommended that people buy Vietnamese set-top boxes with digital TVs to save money and to receive television signals more effectively.



5,000

preschools in 50 cities and provinces across Vietnam are unlicensed, according to a recent report by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Only 34 percent of the 16,000 private preschools that take care of kids under 36 months have a license, and most of the licensed schools are family-run.

There are nearly 1,200 unlicensed preschools in the northern province of Bac Ninh alone, while the northern city of Hai Phong has around 8,000 children enrolled at unregulated preschools, according to the ministry's figures. Abuse and poor-quality education, which have been reported by local media, stem from a lack of governmental authorization for these schools to operate.

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The Bulletin

Promotions and News in HCMC and beyond..



ISHCMC TURNS 20

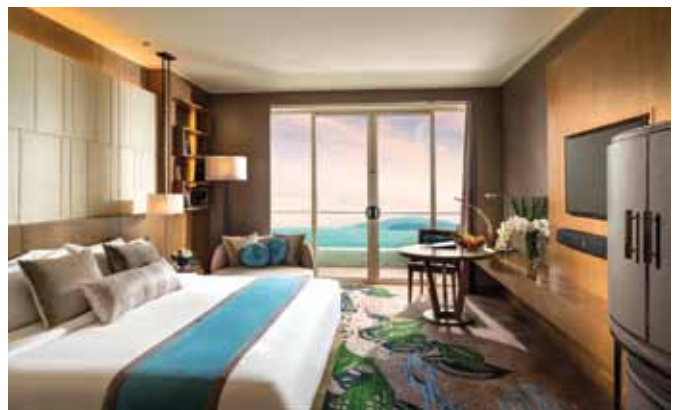
ISHCMC IB World School (www.ishcmc.com) celebrated their 20th anniversary in style when over 300 parents, teachers and friends of the school came together as a community by attending a 'Great Gatsby' event last month at the Intercontinental Hotel. ISHCMC is the most established school in Ho Chi Minh City and the only one with full accreditation to teach all three IB programs to students from 2 to 18 years of age. The school has been successfully graduating students to top tier universities worldwide since 2000. ISHCMC has over 50 different nationalities represented within the diverse school community.



ONLINE TUTORING PLATFORM

Recently launched, DestinationTutor is a tutoring platform for students and tutors to connect online and arrange lessons in any subject. Students and tutors can then meet face to face for personalized tutoring in the subject of their choice. The new online tutoring platform, which is also mobile friendly, offers students and tutors an affordable way to meet and schedule lessons without having to pay a heavy commission per lesson, creating savings upwards of 30 to 40 percent per lesson. The site is free of charge and offers one year professional membership to the first 100 tutors and 100 students who register. Professional membership provides users access to all site features.

Founded in HCMC, **DestinationTutor.com** has expanded to include Hanoi and Danang.



INTERCONTINENTAL OPENS IN NHA TRANG

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has opened the doors of the brand new InterContinental in Nha Trang. The 279-room hotel overlooks the pristine coastline and waters of the Nha Trang Bay and includes 56 luxuriously furnished suites. The hotel's main restaurant Cookbook Café offers live interactive cooking stations with seafood, char grilled meats and Vietnamese specialties, while poolside bar Aqualine provides guests with views over the bay as they enjoy light bites. Those looking to unwind can enjoy signature drinks at the Lobby Bar. The hotel has three outdoor swimming pools and a fully equipped Fitness Centre, while Spa InterContinental offers guests modern and traditional treatments, equipped with a couple's suite, sauna and jacuzzi, among others.

To celebrate the opening, InterContinental Nha Trang is offering an Opening Special Promotion for bookings made between April 1 and June 30 from VND2,500,000++ per night. The rate includes complimentary daily buffet breakfast and wireless internet access.

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JAPANESE BBQ

Vui Vui, a restaurant specializing in barbecue and Japanese-style hot pot, is the newest addition to Saigon's Japanese restaurants. Located at 125A Tran Quoc Thao, D3, Vui Vui opens daily from 11am to 10pm. The highlight of Vui Vui restaurant is barbecue with beef imported directly from the US and sauces to marinate the meat before grilling. It also offers a variety of set lunches including Yakiudon—Stir fried udon noodle, Kimuchi Pokka—Stir fried kim chi and pork, Chige—Spicy hot pot, Sukiyaki lunch set and Purukogi—Korean style BBQ. The restaurant offers free rice, iced tea and dessert for diners who order set lunches, each set priced from VND95,000 to VND150,000. And until May, diners who order one portion of meat will be offered free vegetables, kim chi, salad and rice. In addition, you can also choose one of two types of soup or Korean style steamed eggs.

The restaurant has two floors with each floor accommodating approximately 100 guests. The second floor will only open to serve big groups of diners who reserve in advance. Diners can sit at the table and Western-style sofa or on the wood floor.

For bookings and inquiries, visit www.vuivui.net.vn

LITERARY DAY

It was great times for **Renaissance International School Saigon** (www.renaissance.edu.vn) as author and poet Kenn Nesbitt came to spend a day with pupils. Nesbitt was named the US Children's Poet Laureate in 2013 and has been touring schools throughout Asia raising awareness about children's natural love of poetry. The pupils at Renaissance enjoyed poems and other writing, videos, songs and games. Some pupils performed dramatic presentations of Nesbitt's poem while others composed a song based on one of his many humorous poems. Many pupils were inspired to write their own poems. Nesbitt did presentations to Early Years through to Year 8 pupils. He spent time in a special writing workshop with the winners of a Primary School poetry contest. Students treated Nesbitt to special presentations and interpretations of his writing, and students learned what it takes to be a writer.

GYM OPENING

Good news for all fitness enthusiasts. A new 2500 square meter Getfit gym and yoga center has just opened at the third level of H3 Building, 384 Hoang Dieu, D4. The center offers professional gym services, yoga, kickboxing and classes for Zumba dance, belly dance, aerobics, Taichi balance, among others. The gym is also equipped with nutrition bars, steam and sauna and wifi.

For more info, visit www.getfit.vn



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SOUTH EAST ASIAN MATHS COMPETITION 2014

Students and staff at the **British International School** (www.bisvietnam.com) were honored last month by a visit from Professor Marcus du Sautoy from Oxford University. Prof. du Sautoy spent the day at BIS interacting with students during workshops and meeting with the BIS Maths Department. Students learned why the number 17 is so important, other than being the professor's football shirt number.

Professor Du Sautoy was also the guest speaker at the recent South East Asian Maths Competition (SEAMC). SEAMC 2014 was held at the British Vietnamese International School (BVIS), Binh Chanh from February 27 to March 2. Marcus du Sautoy is the Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science and Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of New College. In 2004 *Esquire* chose him as one of the 100 most influential people under 40 in Britain and in 2009 he was awarded the Royal Society's Faraday Prize, the UK's premier award for excellence in communicating science.

SEAMC is an annual two-day event organized by local volunteer teachers on a rotational basis throughout the region. Hundreds of international school students, aged 15 or younger, and their teachers come together for a long weekend to share their enthusiasm for Mathematics and problem solving.



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INTERCONTINENTAL ASIANA SAIGON PROMOTIONS

There's no better way to celebrate Easter than spending valuable time with your family and friends at **InterContinental Asiana Saigon** (corner of Le Duan and Hai Ba Trung, D1). On April 20, Market 39 and Yu Chu will offer an Easter Brunch for VND1,599,000++ and VND1,399,000++ per person, respectively. The Easter Brunch will include free flow of Veuve Clicquot Champagne, cocktails, house wine, beer, soft drinks, and coffee. You can also enjoy a buffet dinner at Market 39 on Liberation and Labour Day (April 30 and May 1) for VND999,000++ per person including free flow of house wine, beer, soft drinks and signature cocktails.

For more info or to make a reservation, call 3520 9099 or email dine@icasianasaiagon.com



ASCOTT'S ANNIVERSARY OFFERS

To commemorate its 30th anniversary, Ascott is offering promotions for stays at Somerset Serviced Residences from April 1 till December 31. Ascott's online members can enjoy at least 30 percent off Best Flexible Rates at participating properties in over 30 cities worldwide including Ho Chi Minh City. Simply log in or sign up for the complimentary Ascott online membership at www.the-ascott.com/en/myascott/signup.html to enjoy the special rates. Guests who make bookings of 30 consecutive nights or more will receive a complimentary night for every 30 consecutive nights of stay. Guests can redeem their free nights at any Ascott property worldwide. In-house guests who refer their friends or business associates to stay at Ascott's serviced residences for a minimum of 30 nights will be rewarded with cash vouchers redeemable for complimentary stays at any Ascott serviced residence worldwide. Corporate clients who are members of Ascott's rewards program, The Link Club, can get 30 percent off redemption points between April 1 and September 30, where they will enjoy privileges such as dining, shopping and travel. Call (04) 39342342 or visit www.the-ascott.com for further info.

LEARNING TO BIKE

FirstBIKE now offers balance bikes in Vietnam. FirstBIKE aids in the development of the child's essential balance and provides a no-stress method of learning to ride a bike. It eliminates the need for training wheels which are counterproductive and do not support proper posture or spinal development. Balance bikes, which are extremely popular in Europe, UK, USA and most of the West, are best for kids from about 22 months to five-years-old. The bikes are lightweight, comfortable and provide maneuverability to ensure the child can travel long distances without getting tired.

Visit www.firstbike.com.vn for more info.

DRINK IN SOPHISTICATION

Continuing with the series of Park Hyatt Masters of Food and Wine, Park Hyatt Saigon is inviting cocktail enthusiasts and local residents to take part in an interactive session and learn how to prepare 2 Lam Son martini bar classic cocktails on April 19 from 2:30pm-5:30pm. This hands-on demonstration guarantees to both inform and entertain its guests as they shake, stir and sip the art of crafting drinks. Cost per person is VND840,000++.

For reservations, email nguyen.luu@hyatt.com or call 3824 1234

EASTER CELEBRATION

New World Saigon Hotel's (www.saigon.newworldhotels.com)

Parkview Restaurant will present an Easter Dinner Celebration on April 18-19 from 6pm to 10pm. The buffet consists of roasted lamb, honey glazed ham and lobster along with a sumptuous selection of salads, pastas, sizzling Asian dishes and an array of Easter desserts priced at VND820,000. And on April 20, an Easter Champagne Brunch awaits from 12pm to 3pm priced at VND1,200,000 per person including free flow of Louis Roederer Champagne, house wine, draft beer, soft drinks and juices. Especially for guests' little bunnies, New World Saigon Hotel will organize an Easter egg hunt and egg painting corner filled with colorful surprises. For a special treat, relax and indulge at The Spa with a 20 percent discount on all treatments from April 20 to May 1.

To make info, call 3822 8888 or email saigon@newworldhotels.com

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CALLING YOUR BLUFF

The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip (www.thegrandhotramstrip.com) has opened for preview play along Vietnam's south-central coast. Designed by legendary golfer Greg Norman, who spent 331 consecutive weeks at top the world golf rankings, The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip trades on geographical traits that course architects dream of. Routed over and around towering seaside sand dunes less than two hours southeast of Ho Chi Minh City, The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip is one of the few championship-caliber links courses with significant elevation changes, making for a golf experience that's as much a feast for the eyes as it is a challenge to tame. While the highest point of the rugged, windswept property is 50 meters above sea level, on the 15th green, one of the most spectacular spots comes earlier in the round, on the 4th hole.


When finished, The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip will include a 2,300 square meter clubhouse housing an array of dining outlets and a PGA-staffed driving range with more than 3,000 square meters worth of practice and training facilities. Limited Golf Membership opportunities will be rolled out in March. The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip is among several components of The Grand Ho Tram Strip's first stage of development. The ambitious project already features a 541-room upscale hotel, over 10 restaurants and bars, a spa, nightclub, convention center and casino with 90 gaming tables and over 600 slot machines.



EQUATORIAL HOTEL PROMOTIONS

Enjoy a dinner buffet on Hung King's Celebration Day on April 9 at Chit Chat at The Café (www.equatorial.com/hcm/) for VND940,000+-. The buffet features a number of action stations with chilli crab, kaki furai, seafood paella, grilled lobster and an international cheese board and includes free flow of beer, wine and soft drink. Celebrate Easter Sunday on April 20 at Orientica restaurant which offers over 30 selection of Dim Sum priced at VND310,000++ per person. On the same day, Chit Chat at The Café will offer an Easter brunch buffet for VND750,000++ per person from 11:30am to 2:30pm. Food on offer includes roasted lamb with rosemary sauce, oyster, grilled lobster, roasted beef with herbs. A Chocolate Corner filled with chocolate bunnies and chocolate Easter eggs will also be featured. If you want to satisfy your seafood cravings, The Café boasts a large selection of seafood on a dinner buffet, priced at VND840,000++ per adult including free flow of beer, wine and soft drink, that runs every Saturday night from 6:30pm to 10pm.



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FESTIVE OFFERINGS

Celebrate the Thai New Year, Songkran, at Cafe Central An Dong (4th floor, Windsor Plaza Hotel, 18 An Duong Vuong, D5) and experience a collection of Thai dishes including spicy papaya salad, savory pad thai and aromatic coconut curries. And on April 9, indulge on Vietnamese specialties and on April 20, bring your kids for a festive Easter brunch featuring roast pig, lamb, hot cross buns and specialty desserts. There will be activities with prizes for kids. Adults ordering buffet (priced at VND498,000++ per person) can enjoy free flow of Krombacher beer and Henkell Trocken sparkling wine.

On Liberation Day, April 30, celebrate with a selection of Vietnamese dishes in addition to the international buffet. Adult buffet orders include free flow of Krombacher beer. Bring your family every Sunday as Windsor offers free buffet for every two children under 10 years old per family and 50 percent discount for senior citizens.

For bookings and more info, call 3833 6888 or visit www.windsorplazahotel.com



TAXI BOOKING

Easy Taxi, the world's leading free mobile taxi application is now available in Vietnam, starting with Ho Chi Minh City and promises to soon expand to other big cities including Hanoi. Working with major taxi companies, they are hooked up to the most reliable taxis in the city. Available to download on Android, iOS, Blackberry and Windows operating systems, Easy Taxi allows users to book and track for the nearest available reliable taxi for any trip. With one simple click on their phone, passengers can interact directly with taxi drivers, and gain access to additional details such as phone number and car model. All trip records and drivers' data are saved in the app, which could be helpful in case passengers need to retrieve their forgotten belongings. Easy Taxi offers both drivers and taxi companies a different channel to generate more rides, hence, more revenues, especially in a competitive market for taxi companies. The application was founded in 2012 and is backed by Rocket Internet, the world's largest Internet incubator.



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Nothing Hidden, Everything Sacred

Sketching the textures of Vietnam

TEXT BY **JAMES PHAM** ILLUSTRATIONS BY **JORGE ROYAN**

“IN THE SECULAR West, where nothing is sacred, everything seems hidden; yet in Asia, where nothing is hidden, everything is sacred.” — Steve McCurry, photographer of the iconic “Afghan Girl” image.

McCurry was speaking of India, “where millions have no home but the streets, virtually every life event is carried out in public: prayer, eating, sleeping, nursing, crude dentistry, even bodily functions,” but his description could easily apply to Vietnam, where life, in all its gritty glory, is lived on the streets.

That sense of raw, uninhibited openness has inspired many an artist, including Argentinean architect, photographer and urban sketcher, Jorge Royan, on a recent trip through Vietnam. Armed with his pencil case and watercolor box, this swarthy, animated man walked Saigon’s back alleys, peered into homes and generally got lost in the textures of the city.

“In the US, people may be sitting and eating together in a McDonald’s, but you feel nothing from them. They’re hidden behind a mask. In Buenos Aires [where Jorge lives], there’s a long history of insecurity, so everything is secluded, everything is behind doors. You go to the West, you have the cars and the front of houses — that’s all you see. They’re capsules. Here in Vietnam, you see the shops, the houses; people eat out on the street so you can see what they’re eating. On motorcycles, you see everything they carry. Amazing! There’s also a huge sense

of community, people living in swarms of social hubs, eating, working together. Everything has color. Here, things have texture, depth, light and dark. In Vietnam, everything has a soul.”

With a background in architecture and photography, Jorge brings a tangible structure, a certain proportional rigidity to his detailed sketches which take on strong

going about their everyday lives.

Jorge is a part of a growing movement called “urban sketching,” a group of like-minded individuals finding camaraderie through a shared love of paper and ink. Only reluctantly introduced to sketching about three years ago (“I thought it would be boring”), he says he was instantly hooked.

“It became about where to sketch and with whom to sketch. I used to work in photography and there’s no people there; it’s highly competitive. Everyone hates everyone. But with sketching, people are very friendly.”

Jorge’s tools are mainly pencils and ink pens with calligraphic nibs and a set of watercolor paints, sometimes stored in a jerry-rigged Altoids box or a tin of Starbucks mints with which he creates delightful vignettes, some incredibly detailed, of places he’s traveled: a café stairwell in France, a barbershop in Seattle or a piazza in Bologna.

“In my country [of Argentina], we live in constant fear. In Buenos Aires, there is a lot of violence and social confrontation. It’s not safe. [When I sketch outside] I sit with my back against the wall. Guys could just

walk up and say, ‘I like your watercolors. Give them to me.’ That’s not a joke. But here in Vietnam, I’ve been working late nights on the streets and it never crossed my mind that I was in danger. I can find myself in a narrow alley, in the dark, and people will look at me but they’ll be friendly.”

When he’s not able to draw in situ, Jorge



IMAGE BY TONY KUEHN

“Everything has color. Here, things have texture, depth, light and dark. In Vietnam, everything has a soul”

architectural tones. In his one month trip visiting Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An (where he coincidentally met *Oi’s* “Postcards From Vietnam” columnist and fellow watercolorist Bridget March) and Ho Chi Minh City, Jorge has been filling up a smaller Moleskine notebook with his hour-long sketches of cyclo drivers, itinerant vendors and people



“There’s something wonderful with only a piece of paper and a pencil, nothing more,” he says, adding sternly: “Your generation is missing out. With AutoCAD or an iPad, you cannot add in all the details. You need to be able to sketch.”

often falls back on his photography skills, collecting images which he can sketch back in his Buenos Aires studio, eschewing the romantic notion of drawing inspiration from direct observation. “There’s a myth in my eyes that you have to draw right there to get the movement, the atmosphere of the place. Me? I feel nothing. It’s not about the atmosphere, the smells. Things are not things. Things are carriers of patches of color, black and white. I don’t care about the things. I don’t give a damn whether you can smell the steam from the food. I admire people who can feel the atmosphere. I wish I were like that but it’s not me. I think you can find the right angle, capture it in a photo and transfer it into art with all the time in the world.”

Instead of the “feel” of a place, what Jorge looks to capture are angles, proportions and depth. “As a photographer and a sketcher, you must be like a bird,” he says. “If you dropped a bird here, he would see all the corners, high and low. If the best angle is up there [as he points to the corner of the café we’re sitting in], you have to find a way to get there. When you begin moving, things change their position and space. It’s amazing how things change even if you move 10 cm to the side or to the front. For me, half the fun and half the problem is to find the right angle. Climb something, get under the table, put things

in front of something else to get depth.” In his kit, Jorge often carries a Da Vinci frame, a graduated cellophane window, used to determine perspective and proportion, to help re-create 3D images in 2D.

A Generation Missing Out

For this artist, the purity of Old School rings true. “There’s something wonderful with only a piece of paper and a pencil, nothing more,” he says, adding sternly: “Your generation is missing out. With AutoCAD or an iPad, you cannot add in all the details. You need to be able to sketch. I see how my daughter uses the pencil and her hand trembles. It’s like a different animal to her.” Photography is different, he’s quick to point out. “Digital is better than film. It’s amazing what colors digital can pick up in the shadows. Shooting film is like hunting your own food. It’s heroic, but who wants to be a hero?”

For the most part, Jorge is a proponent of simplicity. “The fewer tools you use, the better. On internet forums, you’ll find mostly people talking about equipment, lenses. But to talk about composition and framing, it’s much tougher. If you get rid of all that and you just want to focus on an idea, the fewer tools you have in your box, the better. To choose something is to renounce other things,” he adds philosophically.

Originally involved in Urban Sketchers,



a network of thousands of artists across the world who draw cities where they live or travel, Jorge now manages a much smaller Facebook group called Sketching Workshops, with around 150 even-level members, including four from Vietnam.

“I believe sketching is the best thing I’ve found for the benefit of many because sketching is really an excuse. Sketching

is the ‘what.’ What comes is the ‘how.’ Through sketching, you can connect with people all over the world. You can exchange ideas and make friends and make something that’s pure, that doesn’t depend on screens, that’s not made on an iPad. It’s something so basic, so natural, so pure that it helps people join together and meet all over the world through the simple pleasure of

drawing. It’s not about the sketch itself. Who cares about the drawing? It’s about the exchange.”

For more of Jorge’s work, visit his art blog at www.sketchesjr.blogspot.com or visit the Sketching Workshop page on Facebook for useful tips on how to begin sketching, including pen and ink work and drawing patterns and shapes. ■

THE MYTH:

Is it true that the new metro lines will just cover District 1?

SPECULATION ON WHERE Saigon’s metro lines will be located has been rampant since as early as 2001 when city officials announced plans for an underground public transportation system. It has taken seven years for a blueprint to be finalized and a map of the planned metro system to be released to the public. According to the map, the metro system will cover the entire city and its surrounding areas (Suoi Tien, Binh Chanh, among others) and comprise of six lines. The heart of this system will be in the area around Ben Thanh Market, a triangular hub made up by Ben Thanh Station, Tao Dan Park Station, and Cong Hoa Roundabout Station.

LINE 1 RED LINE

Ben Thanh - Suoi Tien stretches from the central hub, through to the Saigon Opera House and District 2 zone, heading for Suoi Tien theme park

LINE 2 PURPLE LINE

Thu Thiem - Tay Ninh Bus Center starts from Thu Thiem new city zone, a satellite development zone of Saigon, passing through Ben Thanh central hub, and ends at the Tay Ninh Bus Station, a transportation hub from which passengers can continue to other parts of the city

LINE 3 GREEN LINE

Binh Phuoc - Tan Kien starts from Binh Phuoc, passing through Ben Thanh central hub, and ends at Tan Kien



LINE 4 YELLOW LINE

Phu My Hung - District 12 is more or less regarded as an inner city line as it starts from Phu My Hung within District 7, passing through the central hub in District 1 and ending in District 12

LINE 5 BLUE LINE

Can Giuoc Bus Center - Saigon Bridge is one of the two lines that does not pass through Ben Thanh central hub. Line 5 connects with Line 1 at the Saigon Bridge Station, follows a half loop passing through the District 1 and 2 interim, the districts of Phu Nhuan and Tan Binh, then ends at the Can Giuoc bus center

LINE 6

Ba Queo - Phu Lam is the shortest line of the six. Line 6 connects Ba Queo Station of Line 2 and Phu Lam Station of Line 3

Out of the six lines, there are also two special branches that start from Tan Son Nhat airport and connect with Line 4 at Gia Dinh Park Station (in Phu Nhuan District) and Line 5 at Lang Cha Ca Station (gray dotted lines).

So far, only Line 1 has a date when construction will start - this year. ■



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Six Senses Con Dao is located in a national park and one of Vietnam's four marine protected areas. Comprising 50 contemporary pool villas, it offers several dining alternatives with seafood and world cuisine focus. The Six Senses Spa has a backdrop of the Lo Voi Mountains, plus there are activities on hand to entertain all ages.

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 - 4 adults in Ocean Front 2 Bedroom Pool Villa.
 - 6 adults in Ocean Front 3 Bedroom Pool Villa.
 - 8 adults in Ocean View 4 Bedroom Pool Villa.
- Offer exclusively for Vietnamese nationals and expatriates in Vietnam; ID Cards must be shown upon check-in, or Best Available Rate will be charged.
- Offer applies for new bookings only.
- Offer is subject to availability.
- Turtle Season offer is applicable for stays between May 5 to September 30, 2014 only.





Mistress of Mayhem

Vietnam's notorious female crime boss

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGE BY **LE HAI**

DUNG HA'S DEATH on June 3, 2004 marked an end to Saigon's criminal empire. She died in the heart of District 1, felled by a bullet through her head in front of K bar on 17 Bui Thi Xuan. Her violent end sparked a four-year-long bloody conflict in the shadows of the Vietnamese underworld. Within those four years, a countrywide manhunt was conducted to ferret out the true murderer. Criminal turf wars burned down streets in District 4 and areas from Ho Chi Minh City to Hai Phong. Internal purges of crime syndicates became daily news, and the press uncovered a rising number of backroom political skirmishes. Eventually, all this culminated in the arrest and execution of Saigon's most notorious crime boss, Nam Cam, and the dissolution of his empire. Some believed it was out of fear of her growing power that Nam Cam betrayed her and ordered her assassination.

Who is this woman whose death marked the beginning of the end for Nam Cam?

Dung Ha was a godmother and the leader of her own Hai Phong-based crime syndicate, whose size, reach and power rivaled that of Nam Cam's. Born in 1965 in the coastal town of Hai Phong, Dung Ha, whose real name is Vu Thi Hoang Dung, was the youngest child in a family of six. Her home was a tiny house in alleyway number 23 on Trang Trinh road. Her childhood was spent on the banks of the Lap River, in between the Iron Market (infamous for its infestation of petty crimes) and the town's prison. This short dirt path connecting the two hotspots of crime and incarceration served as the background to Dung Ha's formative years – so no one was particularly surprised that by the time she was a teenager, Dung Ha had a long rap sheet consisting of pickpocketing and petty theft.

Vietnam's Bonnie and Clyde

In her long and colorful history, Dung Ha had many lovers of both genders, many of whom she used for her own selfish gains and vice versa; however her relationship with Hung Com stood out for its sincerity and the lengths to which she was willing to go for his sake.

The two grew up under different

circumstances. Hung Com had a decent childhood and was raised in a middle class area in Lach Tray, Hai Phong. But despite his auspicious upbringing, Hung Com had turned to a life of crime and by the time the pair met, and had already become an infamous criminal in the underworld hierarchy. Dung Ha's relationship with Hung Com elevated her reputation in the eyes of her peers, and eventually led her down the path to bigger, more daring, more ambitious, and finally more dangerous crimes.

Dung Ha's devotion to her lover was tested when in 1990 Hung Com was arrested by the police and sentenced to death. In response, she organized and personally led an attempt to break him out of prison the day before his execution, the mere planning for which was unimaginable at the time for the Vietnamese underworld – carried out by a female criminal in the name of love, no less.

Her attempt failed.

Hung Com's death marked Dung Ha's spiraling descent into the pit of the underworld. Over the next two decades, she built an empire out of illegal gambling joints, loan sharking, drug trafficking and racketeering. Her gang controlled the entire city of Hai Phong and in the early 1990s, she began her spread southward to Saigon – into Nam Cam's territory.

What happened in Ho Chi Minh City between Nam Cam and Dung Ha is unclear, except for their deaths. The latter died from a gunshot wound to the head, while the former was executed by a police squad.

Dung Ha's funeral in her hometown, called the Funeral of the White Flowers, was flooded with white roses from her crew, neighbors, relatives, friends and even surviving rivals, with a procession stretching two kilometers from her childhood home to the city's Opera House.

Despite the crimes she committed, many claimed they had flourished under her rule and felt protected against criminals from other cities. As the Vietnamese saying goes: "No matter how terrible the crimes committed, if the criminal reaches truly great heights and goes where no one else dared to go before, she will still be remembered as legendary." ■



Over After

LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN VIETNAM

Many foreigners come to Vietnam and fall in love – not just with the culture, the history, the scenery, but with the local people who become their boyfriends, girlfriends, or, eventually, husbands and wives. However, jumping into a relationship with someone from a different culture can be a bit like stepping onto a minefield. Challenges abound where to tolerate might not be enough, to accept might be okay but still not enough, to celebrate might be the way to go. So in that spirit, let's eat, drink and be married!



HOW GOOGLE TRANSLATES LOVE

For two married couples, language barriers were not a problem with the help of a free computer translation service

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD  IMAGES BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG



IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a truth universally acknowledged with regards to Western men in want of a Vietnamese wife, you're likely to find most eligible bachelors putting "speaks my language" close to the top of the list of desirable attributes in a local woman. For most expat Romeos, a reasonable grasp of English on the part of their perfect match is a prerequisite to any long-term international relationship, let alone a lifelong commitment – and it's hard to imagine real love breaking through such an intimate cultural barrier without the bride-to-be having comfortably made it through her ESL classes first.

There are, of course, always exceptions to the rule. When 58-year-old Franklin Atkins first landed in Ho Chi Minh City from the US five years ago, he had a single purpose – to "get me a wife" – with language ability not being an issue in the slightest.

"Really, the first two weeks, I was just having fun," he says candidly, sitting with Cuc – whose significant limitations with English are surpassed only by Franklin's

non-existent Vietnamese. "I was like a kid in a candy store. But after that I thought, it's time to do what I came here for. A friend of mine from the States called and asked how I was doing, and I said, 'I'm having fun, but I haven't found anybody yet.' Then he said he had a niece. So he called her, and then she showed up."

"The first day, we just talked," he says. "It was funny because she didn't speak a word of English. I'm talking to her in English and she's talking in Vietnamese, and we're looking at each other, laughing at each other. That's how we met."

With the help of a translator, Cuc managed to make a good enough impression on Franklin that his decision came fairly quickly. "I asked her to marry me, I gave her my word. I gave her my ring, and I said, as far as I'm concerned, we're married. That was five years ago."

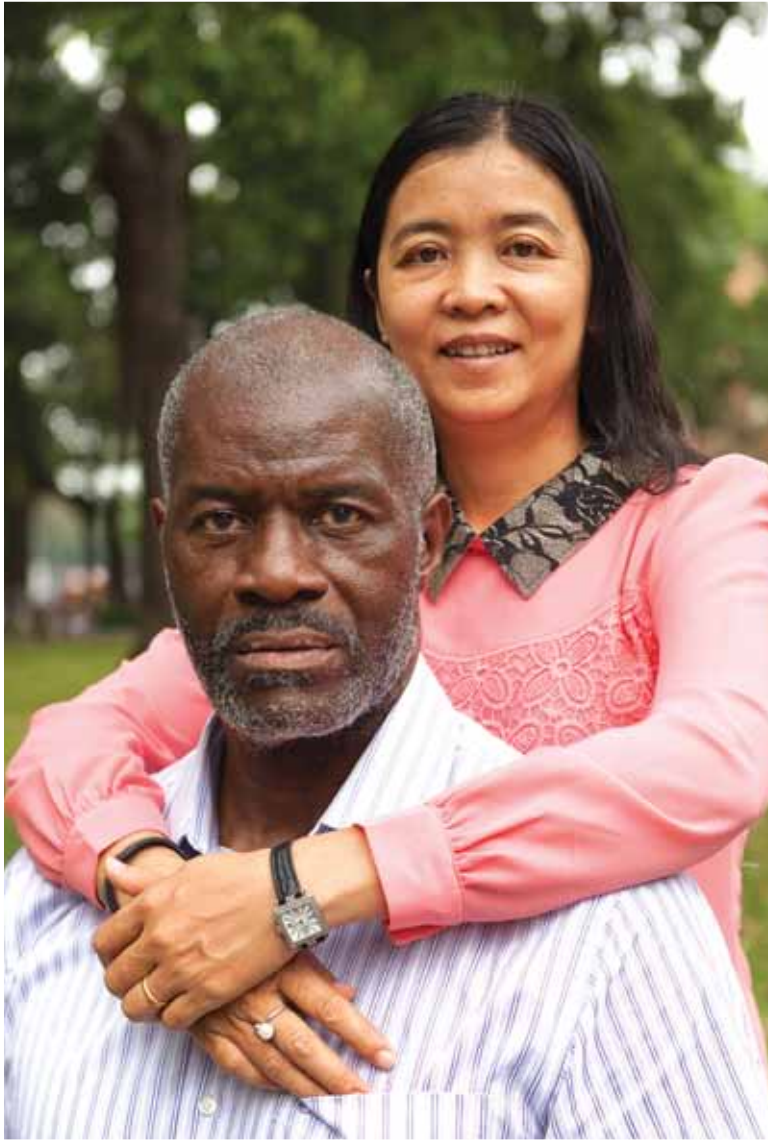
For Cuc, the leap of faith was far more difficult. A country girl through and through, Cuc had never laid eyes on a foreigner before the night they met – and

what was more, at 39, she'd never even had a boyfriend.

"I took her on a two-week vacation," says Franklin. "We were sitting in the van, looking at each other, laughing, and she took my hand, and she started scrubbing it with a towel. So I asked the translator, will you ask her what she's doing to my hand? She replied, 'His hands are dirty, I'm trying to clean them.' That told me right then that she'd never seen a black person's hands. I told them that's the first time I ever had a woman try to wash the black off of me!"

While Cuc's initial interest in marrying an American was the chance to be closer to her uncle, things changed soon after accepting Franklin's proposal – her uncle unexpectedly passed away just weeks after the couple met.

"As soon as my uncle died, I wanted to back out," she says. "I didn't have any other reason to go to the States. But then he really started to show me that he cared about me, and he was honestly making an effort to marry me. So I let things be. After he flew



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"HER KNOWING ENGLISH, OR NOT
KNOWING ENGLISH, ISN'T GOING TO
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home, he called me five times a week, which showed me that he cared a lot. I appreciated that."

"She had a limited vocabulary," says Franklin about the phone conversations they'd go through on an almost nightly basis. "Hello, how are you, I miss you. I love you." It was kind of like a script. But it got better. This was during the first two years. We used to laugh about that conversation, because you need to laugh. I would say my

part, and then she would say her part. We'd talk for five minutes. We pretty much said the same thing."

Not being able to fully communicate certainly tested the relationship, but Franklin was resolute in his decision to keep things going – largely because of the strong impression he had of Vietnamese women. "I had a lot of clients of mine that were Vietnamese," he says. "All the way up to Illinois. And all of the women, I just

stood back and I watched them. In different houses, and in different places. And they were all pretty much the same. They were all nice. So I said, I'll take one of them, because I don't want another wife that I gotta live with this issue and that issue."

"The thing I liked about them was," he adds, "they all was respectful. They tended to the needs of their husbands."

Franklin visits Vietnam periodically, although the couple's wedding has been indefinitely delayed by the local administration's insistence that a husband and wife must be able to communicate on a satisfactory level before being issued with a marriage license. The pair now hope that the length of their relationship will be sufficient evidence of their romantic commitment. During this time, of course, their communication skills have significantly improved, although not so much in terms of spoken language.

"We got that Google thing," says Franklin. "I got real good at typing. But that thing can change it around. I learned real quick that you don't type no long letters. I typed this thing once, and she started to cry. So I had to call the translator, and she spent 30 to 45 minutes just trying to console her. She still cried all night long. All I'd said was, you need to stop acting like a kid. But Google said I'd called her a hooker. Now what I do is I just write one line at a time."

"It's the simple things in life that are important," he says. "I knew she couldn't speak English when I met her. It's not like she could speak it and then all of a sudden she forgot it. To be honest, I don't mind if she never speaks English. Or let me rephrase that – her knowing English, or not knowing English, isn't going to change the way I feel about her. It doesn't make a difference. That's not what the relationship is based on."

READ TILL THE END

For Moises Ornelas, who just married his local sweetheart earlier this year, the opposite is probably true – although in his case, the relationship has been largely reliant on his own progress in Vietnamese. A traveler and lover of languages by nature, Moises arrived in Ho Chi Minh City to further his studies, and ended up with a lot more than he bargained for.

"I wanted to learn a difficult language," says Moises. "I spoke English and Spanish. I wanted to learn something different that people wouldn't expect to come out of my mouth. I wasn't interested in looking for girls. I like Vietnamese girls, but I prefer Vietnamese-American girls."

When Moises first met his wife Thu, she was 18 and still in school. "She had no attraction to me," he says. "I was a lot bigger than I am now, just this fat American guy. My Vietnamese was horrible. There was nothing special there. But then I saw her in an *ao dai* at a convention. I just saw her there, and I thought wow. Gorgeous. The *ao dai* did it. She was beautiful. Just all good."

Fortunately, Thu's naturally friendly character saw the pair become Facebook friends, which opened the door to an online correspondence that began when Moises returned to the States. As Thu's skills in

English were so basic, Moises' conversations with Thu became his major channel for studying Vietnamese.

"We just messaged each other randomly, just so I could improve," says Moises.

"Eventually it started to be every day, an hour or two hours. As we were talking, I wouldn't know certain words she was asking me about, so I would use Google Translate. Over about six months I'd go over every conversation, reread it, restudy it, take all the words out I didn't know and check in a dictionary. If you look at my vocab list you can see everything we talked about, progressively. From the beginning when we were just friends, all the different things in our day."

It wasn't long before feelings began to develop between the two. "She took some convincing," Moises says, "but I did really like her. So I decided to come back to Vietnam and see if our Internet conversation translated into something real. She warned me before I went, she said, well, I only like you 55 percent, and if you get here and your Vietnamese is crap, then we're breaking up."

What Moises didn't know then was that Thu wasn't about to enter into the most important relationship of her life without doing some digging first. She decided to send a letter to Moises' church congregation in the States for an insight into his character.

"They really dogged me out," he complains. "They wrote and said, he's not really stable, he likes to move around a lot. He really likes to go out with a bunch of girls all the time. Then in the very last paragraph, they said but, he really takes care of the congregation, he spends time with the elderly, he watches what other people's needs are, he's got a great heart... it wasn't until the last paragraph that they really represented the whole picture. So I was like, man, if you'd never gotten past paragraph three, four or five, that would have been it!"

When the couple eventually decided to marry, they also had difficulties with the application process – but fortunately, Moises' language abilities made things a little easier. "We had to do a psych evaluation," he explains. "When she did it, the fee was VND400,000. The doctor asked a bunch of questions, what's your Mom's birthday, what's your Dad's birthday, and so on. But she couldn't remember his birthday. So they said oh, you must be crazy. Go talk to the secretary. If you can't remember your Dad's birthday, it means you're crazy. The secretary said oh, in order for us to file, I need VND50,000. And the doctor needs an extra VND200,000.

"So when I go in, she told me, just remember the birthday. I was thinking, this is ridiculous, because they don't even speak Spanish or English. How are they going to test my mental health? So I go in, I pay the fee, I sit down, he's like, 'Uh, what your name. Birthday Mom Dad'. I tell him in Vietnamese. 'What you do?' So I tell him in Vietnamese. He says 'OK, pay extra VND250,000 and all done'. At least he didn't call me crazy."

For the past several weeks since the wedding ceremony, the young couple have started their married life in a small *hem* in



“I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT, BECAUSE WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE EACH OTHER HAPPY. I HAVE TO REMEMBER OUR VOWS ALL THE TIME, TO CHERISH, TO LOVE...”

the Pham Ngu Lao area. As they still speak exclusively Vietnamese, Moises has started to see things from the perspective of a local. "We don't see each other as foreigners," he says. "I consider myself Vietnamese, really. I've changed a lot. I even point at foreigners. I say, 'Look at the foreigner,' and she says, 'What do you think you are?'"

Going native may not have been Moises' original plan, but for now, it seems to be working out. "There's a lot that I agree to

but I don't like," he admits. "I don't think there's anything wrong with that, because we're trying to make each other happy. I have to remember our vows all the time, to cherish, to love... there's a lot of things here that I don't agree with. But it's not so important, it's not the most important thing. I guess the most important thing is to show her that I love her. I always said that before, but it wasn't until we were married that I realized I really had to *express* that." ■



MY BIG FAT COUNTRY WEDDING



The Vietnamese on the other side of the Saigon Bridge refer to weddings as “paying off the mouth’s debt”

TEXT BY NPD KHANH  IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



ON A RECENT Saturday, past the Saigon River and the District 2 development zones, deep into Nhon Trach bordering Dong Nai Province, blushing bride My Trinh married her fellow villageman, Tai. While that Saturday marked the start of the feasting, the wedding process itself had begun weeks ago, starting with the *dam ngo*, a private ceremony where the groom asks the bride’s parents for her hand in marriage, followed by offerings from the groom’s family to the bride’s family.

The *dam ngo* officially kick started their countryside wedding, which traditionally are long, multi-phased, costly affairs that include several days of feasting and often land the newly wedded couple into debt. However, without a lavish ceremony, their friends, families and the community would most likely not acknowledge the matrimony. Regardless of whether the married are rich or poor, firstborns or youngest, a small wedding feast is a lifelong source of shame and, in the rural Vietnamese consciousness, never to be suffered even at the cost of crippling financial losses.

Following the *dam ngo* is the *van danh*, a complicated and costly ritual involving gifts, which can be anything from gold and betel leaves and areca nuts to a roasted whole pig and cash, carried by a succession of family members or hired gift bearers, an event which brings out the entire village.

Only with the completion of these two ceremonies are the couple considered engaged. But My Trinh’s fiancée status lasted only two days as the couple hurried to their wedding feast. The invitations had already been sent out and on Saturday morning, the guests arrived by the hundreds. These weren’t only close friends and family, but also coworkers and distant relatives, many of whom traveled across the country to attend the wedding. Anyone that was considered important was also invited.

The wedding started at 8am as children



dressed in red, arranged by My Trinh's family, tied ropes on the door of her house. Tai was only allowed entry once he had paid the tolls, a few pieces of candy, to the children to persuade them to untie the ropes. An elder bearing incense led the procession into the bride's home, to give his blessing.

From the bride's house, the procession made its way to the couple's future home. At the door, Trinh's mother-in-law came out to greet her new daughter, holding a limestone pot in front of her face as she let Trinh pass through. This greeting is a small rite in itself, signifying that both sides hope to never bear any ill will towards the other.

LET THE FEAST BEGIN

Once the groom's family had shown the bride to her carefully arranged wedding bed and the couple shared a cup of rice wine, the wedding feast was finally able to start. The feast is the longest, most rigorous and costly of all rites of marriage for both My Trinh and Tai. Unlike their city counterparts, countryside weddings can be four to five days of nonstop eating and partying. On the first day they received the closest guests and nearest living relatives. In a show of solidarity, the relatives stayed to help out with all the wedding tasks including the cooking, the greeting, prepping the bride, dealing with drunken guests, and the cleaning up afterwards.

The next few days saw the arrival of guests from far off provinces. Some were distant relatives (whom the couple didn't personally know) and coworkers from My

Trinh's office in the city.

Only when the last of the guests trickled out and the wedding tent was disassembled on the fourth day did the wedding feast officially end and the bride and groom allowed to relax.

"Betel and areca. It used to be that without betel and areca and without a proper multi-day feast, it wouldn't be considered a wedding at all," said My Trinh at the end of her own wedding. "Most of my friends and coworkers in Saigon do not keep the traditions anymore. They don't hold the *dam ngo*. Only some of them still do the *an hoi* (public engagement ceremony). And the wedding itself is more or less just a half-day party with religious props at either a church or nowhere at all."

"They can do all this because city life wouldn't have allowed them a truly traditional wedding anyway. A five-day city wedding feast the same size as mine comes with a bill in the billions. Even all the way out here, in this little village, it costs us nearly a hundred million for the food, the wedding tent, the dresses, and the entertainment. It will take all our lives to repay that kind of debt. And can you imagine pleading off work for an entire week? My boss would sack me," she explained.

"To be honest, I'm a little bit jealous of my city friends," My Trinh confessed. "But it's done. We have paid our 'debts of the mouth'. We can now start our life with each other. Build our own future. But if there's one part of the traditional wedding I look forward to, it's the part where we get to count our lucky money." ■

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"THEY CAN DO ALL THIS BECAUSE CITY LIFE WOULDN'T HAVE ALLOWED THEM A TRULY TRADITIONAL WEDDING ANYWAY. A FIVE-DAY CITY WEDDING FEAST THE SAME SIZE AS MINE COMES WITH A BILL IN THE BILLIONS"

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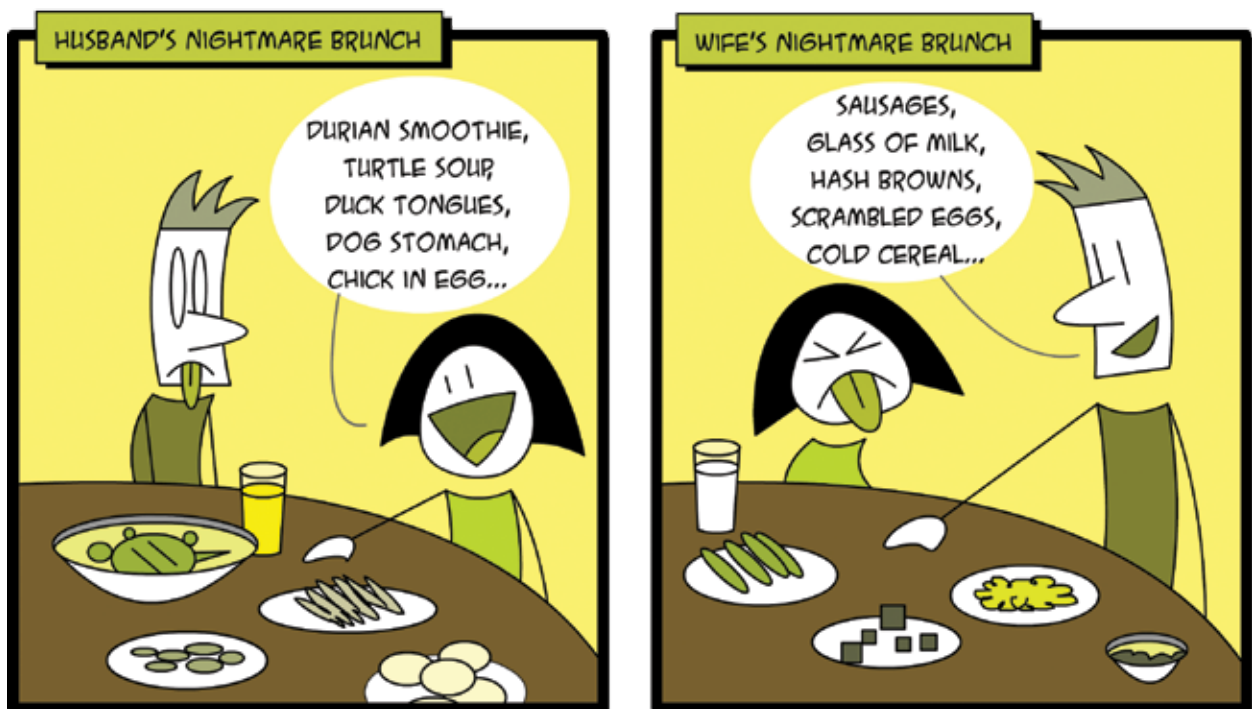


VIETNAMESE WIFE, WESTERN HUSBAND CLUB



A humorous look at the highs and lows of a multicultural marriage

INTERVIEWED BY JAMES PHAM ♡ ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID PERRY



MARRIAGE IS HARD. Add to that the strains of a different language, culture and family values, and it becomes downright imposing. Sometimes you don't know whether to laugh or cry.

One man who has firmly chosen to laugh is cartoonist David Perry, who has found a catharsis of sorts through his humorous, often self-deprecating comics detailing the highs and lows of a multicultural marriage with his wife, Jenny, in his recently self-published book, *Vietnamese Wife, Western Husband Club*. A man of diverse interests, when he's not drawing, David can be found conducting training for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation or leading Audubon Society family birding walks on Sundays.

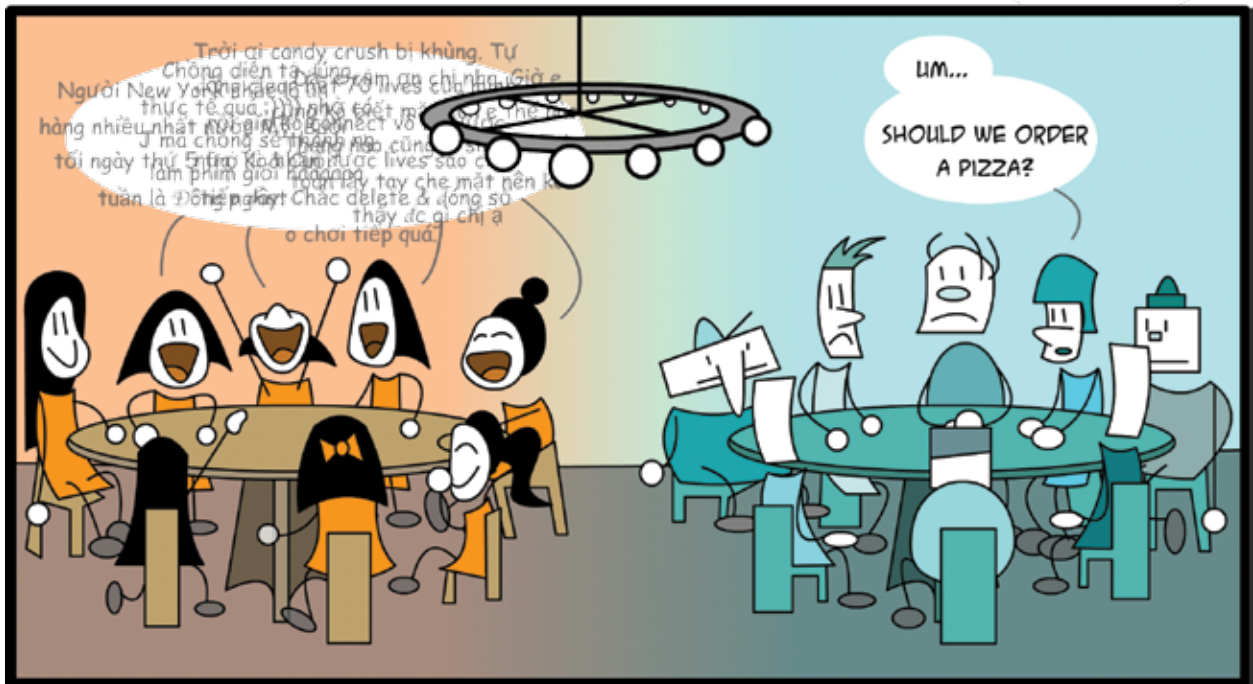
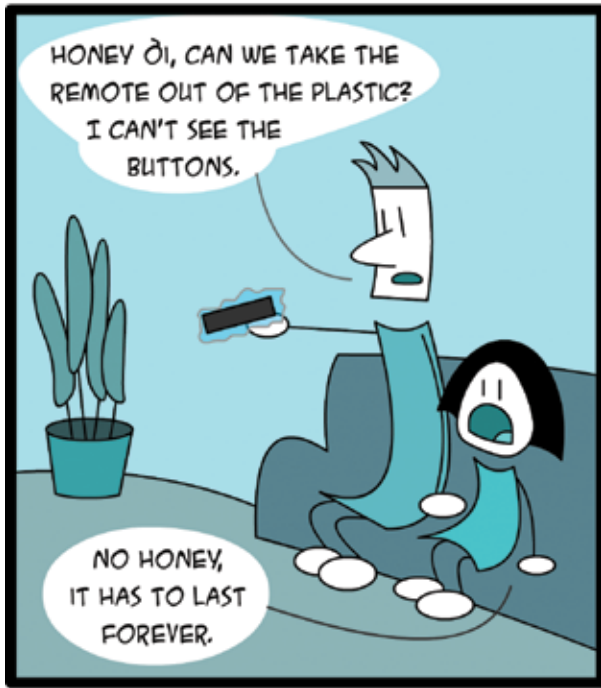
HOW DID YOU GET INTO CARTOONING?

DP: As a kid, I was always drawn to birdwatching and drawing. I was always torn between those two. They're not exactly opposites but different enough that pursuing one would mean neglecting the other. The state school I went to didn't have a great art program so I got a degree in Ecology and Evolution. But it was too much science, so when I needed a break from school, I started doing my own comic books. I see things in my head as animated cartoons, so I became an intern at an animation studio, doing it the old fashioned way with a whole lot of drawings. The whole industry started to tank, which kind of left me with not a whole lot. But as soon as Jenny was in my life, it was natural for me to start cartooning about.

YOUR BOOK IS REFRESHINGLY HONEST IN MANY WAYS,

INCLUDING JENNY'S DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST TIME YOU MET FACE TO FACE, WHERE SHE WRITES, "HE LOOKED BETTER IN HIS PHOTOS AND FOR SOME REASON I THOUGHT HE WAS TALL." HOW DID YOU TWO MEET?

DP: I loved her when I first saw a photo of her. Literally. That was way back, after I had taken a tour to Vietnam with my family. I was trying to find my tour guide's contact info and ended up being put in contact with Jenny [who was working for a travel company in Vietnam]. She said, "Hey, I'm coming to New York. Is there anything I should go see while I'm there?" and we started to hang out [online]. "Oh, just so you know what I look like", she



sent me a gorgeous picture and we started Skyping. Jenny thought I was really photogenic, but at the airport, I'm like: "WOW, there she is!" And she's like: "Oh boy, this guy's not my type." [laughs]

IN THE PREFACE, YOUR WIFE SAYS YOU MUST HAVE BEEN VIETNAMESE IN A PREVIOUS LIFE. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?

DP: Most Americans are really tall. I'm like the perfect body plan of a Vietnamese guy. I'm 5'8" and kind of on the skinny side. When I went [to Vietnam] to live with Jenny and her parents, I just really seemed to fit in... just like part of the family. Also, I'm really not a typical American at all, I'm more laid back, not your typical New Yorker. I love Asian food. Most Americans

can't even eat a whole fish; they have to have everything processed.

AFTER LIVING IN VIETNAM FOR A TIME, YOU BOTH MOVED BACK TO THE US. IS THAT WHEN THE IDEA FOR THE BOOK ORIGINATED?

DP: When I was in Vietnam, there were some online forums that were really popular with Vietnamese girls, but basically it was a Vietnamese wife/Western husband club. I think the girls just needed an excuse to hang out together at a restaurant and I think they kind of assumed that if they brought their husbands along, we would have just as much fun as they were having. The women went crazy, having so much in common, but the men were so different. If we had

any other choice, we wouldn't be hanging out together. It was a case of someone thinking you have "yellow fever" and I'm thinking they have "yellow fever." [laughs]

We were all so different that for the most part it was largely awkward. But the one thing we could talk about was our wives. Once I brought it up, everyone else said, "Oh my God! My wife is exactly the same way!"

In the US, [at similar couples get-togethers], I started bringing my sketch book. I'd talk about certain situations with Jenny, confirming whether this was happening to someone else and every time, it was exactly the same story — the way Westerners were trying to comprehend something, having the same reactions.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF TRUTH BEHIND THE COMICS —



IMAGE BY PHUONGTHU NGUYEN

David & Jenny

SOME YELLING, SOME CRYING, SOME FRUSTRATION, MAYBE... IS IT CATHARTIC FOR YOU TO BE ABLE TO CONVEY THAT?

[Jenny pipes in.] He exaggerates a lot. It's not all real.

[Back to David.] I try to show in my cartoons that there's always love no matter what. Yes, we're frustrated, we have misunderstandings, but there's always a lot of love in the room.

Like Jenny's iPhone has become its own character. It's not really a Vietnamese thing; it's a couples thing. But there are some things that Jenny kind of makes her own. You're not meant to text someone for four hours straight!

THE BOOK INCORPORATES SOME FUNNY WEB TRANSLATION. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO DO THAT?

DP: It's to make it funny but it's also another truth. [Vietnamese wives] are always on Facebook and forums, and we have no idea what's going on. Every guy is going to go to Facebook and use its translation feature. Why is she getting so many likes? Is she talking about me? A lot of these translations are just hilarious by their own right.

WAS THERE ANY CONSIDERATION TO MAYBE

LEAVING CERTAIN TOPICS OUT BECAUSE IT MAY MAKE SOMEONE LOOK BAD? OR DENOTE IT'S NOT A PERFECT MARRIAGE?

DP: Not really. I try to have it even — what Vietnamese do when they're in the US and what expats do when they're in Vietnam. The wives actually seem to like it more, spreading this stuff around. It seems that when they see [comics of] Jenny, they're like: "I get it. I'm totally like that."

There are also some men/women stereotypes in Vietnam. Vietnamese women have a reputation as being the perfect wife, and husbands don't do anything. Now that things are modernizing, the roles switching — sometimes they're even, sometimes reversed. Jenny saw her own parents — her mother working so hard, her father, and I love the guy, but he does a lot of lounging...

WITH A TITLE LIKE "THE VIETNAMESE WIFE, WESTERN HUSBAND CLUB," DO YOU FEEL THE BOOK MAY BE TOO NICHED?

DP: I think that people from Vietnam relate to it more. It's really not a Western genre at all. Most Westerners who have no association with Asian culture at all, which is most, won't even get it. Americans are set in their ways that their culture is the right way and everyone

else is kind of stupid. So you have to be well-traveled enough to get it. I use some mixed Vietnamese language and a bit of introduction to Vietnamese in the book. [O: There are additional comments in the book to provide context for those who may not understand a comic.]

It's a narrow niche, but people within that niche really love it. Jenny is really popular and has a lot of friends/followers. I'd work hard on something and have like two people see my video, meanwhile she'd change her profile pic and hundreds of people would comment on her new haircut. So she's been a really good source for a fan base. Also, since posting a cartoon on the "Another Side of Vietnam" Facebook page, my blog popularity has grown at least 10 times.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR MORE BOOKS?

DP: Since I have a lot of fans now in Vietnam and a lot of people who want to have a translation, I'm thinking of going back to Vietnam and getting a publisher, and starting a new book with more cartoons and comments in Vietnamese.

For more on David and his cartoons, visit www.vwhc.blogspot.com.

David's book, *The Vietnamese Wife, Western Husband*

Club: A Romantic Cartoon is available on Amazon (scan code).





MOONSTRUCK



Romantic landscapes for newlyweds or those looking to get hitched

FOR TRAVEL-LOVERS, a honeymoon or wedding is the perfect opportunity to build the ideal trip. Whether you're after a 'fly and flop' sort of honeymoon recovery or a once in a lifetime wedding, we explore some of the tempting destinations here in Vietnam.

Dalat is the destination of choice for honeymooners. Smiling young couples drift across Xuan Huong Lake in paddle boats shaped like giant swans, while brides in flowing white dresses clamber aboard ponies

and pose for photos. Romance is also in the air at the city's various flower gardens, including an amazing orchid garden where visitors can see rare blue orchids. More utilitarian but equally colorful is the town's central market, overflowing with fresh cut flowers and an incredible variety of fruits and vegetables. No matter when you visit, spring will be in the air.

Ancient Hoi An is located 30 km south of Danang. Hoi An used to be an

international trade center in the 16th and 17th centuries. Though this small town is very popular for summer holidays, it is also one of the most ideal and romantic place for honeymooners.

Relax on the beach, enjoy spas, wander through small streets or go cycling to discover the rural area or just join in a cooking class to experience the local culture, which will make your honeymoon the trip of a lifetime.

LAKESIDE LAVISH

Overlooking Dalat's Tuyen Lam lake and gently undulating hills, Dalat Edensee Lake Resort & Spa is a taste of Europe in Asia, providing a stunning backdrop for a glamorous wedding or blissful honeymoon.

Eden Palace, the property's main building, is a gorgeous 7,000 m² space lit by opulent chandeliers for an Old World feel. For the perfect wedding, look no further than the Baroness, a 550 m² grand Event Hall, illuminated by natural light and conveniently adjoining the Panorama Rooftop Terrace. For a totally stress-free wedding, let Edensee look after all the details of your special day from fresh flowers and an MC and band to the confetti and stage, culminating in a champagne pyramid and of course, a decadent cake to remember.

After the most special of days, honeymooning couples can choose from amongst Edensee's three room categories, all spacious balconies offering sweeping mountain and/or lake views. Or splurge on the VIP Villa, the ultimate opulence, surrounded by lush greenery and set directly by the serene emerald waters of Tuyen Lam Lake.

For 2014, Edensee has put together a Honeymoon Package for the ages at just VND7,500,000 (exclusive of taxes and service charge) per couple which includes:

- Two-night stay in a Deluxe Lake View Room
- Daily full pension (breakfast, lunch & dinner)
- Daily full body massage for two in a VIP room
- Complimentary sports & activities at the resort
- Daily in-room fresh flowers and fruit
- Complimentary transportation to / from Dalat City

For more, visit www.dalatedensee.com, email sales.dalat@dalatedensee.com or phone (063) 383 1515



BEACHSIDE BLISS

Couples seeking the perfect location for their dream beach wedding or honeymoon need only walk through the grounds of Boutique Hoi An Resort to find the dream site for their ideal tropical wedding. Imagine cool breezes coming off the ocean as friends and family gather for an intimate ceremony while a spectacular sunset illuminates the sky as you say your vows.

The resort is set on the renowned Cua Dai Beach in Hoi An and only five minutes away from the old heritage town of Hoi An. There's so much to see and do within a short distance of the hotel that a day at leisure is easily filled with a river cruise to explore the sights of Hoi An, an 18-hole championship golf course, a bike tour around the UNESCO World Heritage town, a half day excursion to the Marble Mountains, and much more.

The resort's gorgeously appointed rooms add uniqueness to that special day. All rooms face the ocean with private balconies while some have direct access to the beach from private terraces. Newlyweds can enjoy a lazy Champagne breakfast in bed as they wake up to the view of the East Sea. Then carry on the theme of relaxation with a wonderful room service day or enjoy a day of pampered relaxation with one of the many treatments on offer at their spa.

The exclusive beach setting, sumptuous cuisine choices and attentive staff make Boutique Hoi An Resort ideal for a wedding by the beach.

For more info, visit www.boutiquehoianresort.com, email info@boutiquehoianresort.com or phone (0510) 3939 111



COLONIAL CLASS

Set amongst the rolling hills and pine trees that Dalat is famous for, Ana Mandara Villas Dalat Resort & Spa is truly a magical destination for any wedding or honeymoon. Comprised of 17 fully restored luxury French colonial villas from the 1920s and 1930s, each villa consists of between three and six en-suited rooms, and includes spacious shared lounge areas and dining rooms, outdoor terraces and sitting areas and even open fireplaces for those chilly Dalat nights (select villas).

Romance finds form at Ana Mandara, whether it be a traditional Vietnamese wedding or a Western-style one by the secluded pool. Let Ana Mandara take care of all the wedding arrangements, including in-room champagne, daily herbal treatments, a custom wedding cake, fresh flowers for the bride and groom as well as for the ceremony and reception, a romantic dinner and very special wedding gifts.

After the big day, couples can explore the town with a 45-minute sightseeing tour by vintage car, and unwind with a 60-minute couples massage at La Cochinchine Spa, housed in its own villa with five treatment rooms providing extraordinary views across Dalat's picturesque landscapes. The sprawling, impeccably manicured property with its mini golf pad amidst exotic flora and fauna simply invites long, romantic walks.

Couples booking a wedding package for more than 100 guests will enjoy a complimentary night's stay with breakfast and a spa package, ensuring the most memorable of occasions.

For more, visit www.anamandara-resort.com, email reservation-dalat@anamandara-resort.com or phone (063) 3555 888



Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



Chocolate Mousse
Le Bacoulos



Lamb chops

Bonjour, Come in!

Hearty French fare in an alfresco setting in District 2

TEXT BY JULIAN AJELLO IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

TUCKED AWAY ON a side street off Thao Dien in District 2 lies a French restaurant named **Le Bacoulos** (13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2). Don't bother to run it through Google Translate, for the word itself has no meaning, invented by the owner. To get the story behind the genesis of this year-old eatery's moniker it's best to chat with the owner, Frenchman David Genouin-Duhamel. While you're at it, don't be shy to ask for recommendations, as he is responsible for crafting the entire menu himself.

Originally from Normandy, David fell in love with gastronomy and the culinary arts, as the French are wont to do, while living in Paris. However, he took the plunge into owning his own French restaurants when he found himself living in Phuket, Thailand, for over a decade. Phuket's loss is Saigon's gain.

Le Bacoulos may serve French food, but the atmosphere feels more like antebellum Vietnam. You won't find white linens,

expensive crystal, or decadent décor here. Instead you'll dine alfresco on simple wooden tables with wicker chairs, surrounded by lush tropical plants and ambient music that's a pleasant accompaniment during your meal. If you relish the idea of a bistro in the tropical outdoors, you'll feel right at home at Le Bacoulos.

The menu has more than a few options spread over a variety of categories. The starters were no exception with myriad selections to satisfy most palates. We opened with baked scallops in garlic butter (VND110,000), a straightforward dish, but a great measuring stick. Small and tender, they were exactly as they should be, and served with fresh bread to make sure none of the garlic elixir was wasted.

The Food

Our other starter, the *salade gourmet* in a nut vinaigrette, was comprised of duck *confit*, duck gizzard, and bacon mixed with

baby greens and topped off with a poached egg (VND180,000), and proved to be a real showstopper. The duck *confit* was crispy and salty on the outside while the meat remained tender and moist, falling off the bone effortlessly. The gizzards, whose texture was more akin to sausage than organ meat, were delectable little gems, and bacon makes everything better. This starter could very well be a finisher for those who don't have a huge appetite, or simply forgot to bring it.

Our desire for meat dictated the mains. We settled on an order of New Zealand lamb chops in herbs and served with ratatouille (VND250,000 for two chops, VND320,000 for three) and the flank steak topped with shallots and served with a baby green salad and mashed potatoes (VND260,000). Several other sides are available should you prefer them.

The lamb chops were ordered rare and didn't disappoint. Served alongside a generous portion of ratatouille, sliced



TOP TO BOTTOM: Flank steak, duck confit, lemongrass sorbet

“The flank steak was succulent and wonderfully textured. The generous portion of fried shallots heaped an extra, savory level atop it. After the first bite you’ll be ready to order another glass of the house red”



cherry tomatoes were sprinkled generously on top. The herb flavoring was distinct, but not overpowering, and proved delicious even for those who prefer their meats naked. The meat itself was tender and the gamey flavor that is often present in lamb was mild to non-existent. The chops were of sufficient size that two should be enough for most people, but the hearty eater, or people who enjoy sharing, can feel good opting for a third.

The star of our meal, however, was the flank steak. Also from New Zealand, David recommended it with such confidence that we didn’t bother asking about the other dishes on the menu that caught our attention. We ordered it very rare, emphasis on ‘very.’ Most kitchens seem apprehensive about serving red meat purple and tepid in the middle. If that’s how you prefer your steak, Le Bacoulos’ chef will not let you down. The flank steak was succulent and wonderfully textured. The generous portion of fried shallots heaped an extra, savory level atop it. After the first bite you’ll be ready to order another glass of the house red (VND50,000). Our choice of sides, mashed potatoes, also ordered on the recommendation of our host, were buttery, creamy, and the ideal complement.

You’ll need to catch your breath after a meal like that before braving the dessert menu. The chocolate mousse (VND90,000) was set squarely in our sights, but our host wouldn’t hear of us not sampling the lemongrass sorbet in strawberry sauce (VND90,000) as well. The mousse was rich and possessed of a delicate, airy texture that is its signature trait. The sorbet was refreshing, tart, and, once again, spot on as a recommendation. They were an absolute joy to eat, and we lamented finishing them.

For those who enjoy a more festive atmosphere, every other Saturday night they have live music that alternates between jazz manouche (aka gypsy jazz) and reggae. ■



The Puppet Master

An evening of surprises at Lang Viet

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

FEW WORDS HAVE the ability to strike true fear in the hearts of gourmands everywhere like “dinner theater.” That simple phrase conjures up images of overly smiling performers finishing up a scene as one of the Von Trapp children just in time to don an apron and serve up a limp salad to a roomful of blue-haired early birds - an concept long on promise but all too often, short on delivery.

So it was with some apprehension that I set out to **Lang Viet** (36 Pham Ngoc Thanh, D3), a restaurant cum water puppet theater, known mostly to tour groups and travel agencies. Cue eye roll and involuntary shudder. What I found, though, was a night of surprises.

Open for just over a year now, Lang Viet is the brainchild of Le Ba Khang, born in Vietnam’s Central Highlands to a northerner father and a southerner mother. His vision in opening up the spacious 300-seat restaurant with an impressively well-designed theater featuring 150 stadium-style seats was to blend culture and food, traditional water puppetry and authentic Vietnamese cuisine.

“Preserve and promote” would be an apt slogan for the restaurant, applying both to the show and the food.

A remodeled villa housing indoor and outdoor seating, Lang Viet, meaning “Vietnamese village,” aims to be all things to all people, an extravaganza of everything Vietnam, from the recreated village gate at the entrance to the stone statues in the landscaped courtyard to the intricate woodwork adorning the property, all to the tune of a whopping VND10 billion in renovations. The décor is “95 percent Vietnamese,” says Khang, as he waves his hand over the Dalat wine bottles used as flower vases, one of the surprisingly few kitschy elements in the otherwise elegant space.

Khang’s obvious enthusiasm for showcasing Vietnam finds its truest form, though, in water puppets, an art form that grew out of traditional water games in the Red River Delta. One of only three places in Saigon to feature water puppetry (the other two being The Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theater and

at the National Museum of Vietnamese History by the Saigon Zoo), the 45-minute show (an optional VND150,000 add-on to dinner, show times are 5pm and 6:15pm) is endearingly whimsical and somehow manages to avoid the drawn out narration and screechy soundtrack commonly associated with any faux cultural shows aimed at tourists. Save for a badly translated pamphlet, the six musicians (with one particularly adept at making sound effects) and nine puppeteers are thankfully left on their own to perform a dozen or so folksy vignettes highlighting countryside activities and myths with surprisingly elaborate effects. The puppeteers, who train for up to two years, guide the wooden puppets using 1.8m rods, recreating realistic movements, from the craning of a phoenix’s neck and the shaking of its tail feathers to the undulating body of a boy swimming after a wayward duck. However, the true beauty of water puppetry is found in what you don’t see – the performers standing in chest deep water, hidden behind a curtain,



TOP TO BOTTOM: Hue style fig salad, Crispy morning glory with shrimp and mango, West Lake style shrimp toast

and the mechanics of the puppets, hidden under the water's surface.

"Even though we never actually touch them, the puppets reflect the mood of the puppeteer. If you're happy or sad, it shows in the way the puppets move. This is truly art. Otherwise, it's like a movie that you might as well watch on DVD," says Hai, one of the lead puppeteers, with more than 20 years of the craft behind him.

Build It, They Will Come

While the dinner service mainly draws in tourists, Khang's aim is really to introduce water puppetry to local Vietnamese. "Probably two of ten Vietnamese will have actually seen water puppetry somewhere other than on YouTube or at the zoo," he says. "It's a shame because it's one of the few things that is uniquely Vietnamese. But if I build it, they will come."

The night's final surprise begins with the post-show dinner. While there is an a la carte menu, Lang Viet is hoping to mimic the success of elevated street food places like Nha Hang Ngon with its strangely named "Calling Buffet" (VND350,000+), a selection of 27 generously portioned dishes from all over Vietnam. Diners are able to order as many dishes as they want, with the waiters trained to give recommendations. Travelers to the North will recognize the very competent versions of *Nem chua be Hai Phong* (crab-filled spring rolls) or the *Banh tom Tay Ho*, the ubiquitous shrimp toast (here made with a sweet potato base) served all around Hanoi's West Lake. Foodies will be excited to find some dishes less common to foreigners, like the *Rau luoc kho quet*, boiled vegetables dipped in a reduced sweet / salty fish sauce, originally a dish born of economic hardship, and the *Goi trai va*, an addictive savory / sweet Hue specialty made from fresh figs, sate, shrimp paste and beef. The ambitious but consistently good menu also has some twists on the norm. The *Goi rau muong chien gion xoai tom* features an unexpected texture in the lightly fried morning glory leaves, almost tempura style, topped with julienned mango and whole shrimp, tossed in a refreshingly citrusy sauce of caramelized palm sugar and freshly squeezed kumquats. Another standout was the *Tom cuon ba chi hun khoi*, bacon-wrapped grilled shrimp on a bed of mango soaked in a passion fruit coulis.

While perhaps the puppet show isn't something you'd want to watch again and again, Lang Viet, as a restaurant, certainly stands on its own merits and deserves a wider audience than simply tourists. Come for the kitsch, stay for the food. ■



>> The List

Wine & Dine

bakeries

ABC Bakery & Cafe

The bakery serves more than 30 different baked products ranging from baguettes to pizza slices, along with a wide selection of drinks such as coffee and fruit juices.

223-225 Pham Ngu Lao, DI

Bread Talk

With a mission to revitalize the once-stale business of bread, Singaporean BreadTalk now has outlets throughout Asia and has established itself in several HCMC locations. A brand partnership with Gloria Jeans has seen a wide range of bakery goods available in the cafés, with both brands sharing the premises at this location.

106 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3930 3181

Brodard Bakery

Brodard Bakery has been operating in Saigon for over 30 years. It provides finely crafted cakes for all occasions in addition to ice cream, pastries, chocolate and tarts.

95 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 2416
6am - 10pm

Cakewalk Cupcakes

Small boutique cupcake shop offers cupcakes with panache. Traditional cupcakes as well as new, creative flavors are sure to satisfy everyone who is compelled to bend to the will of their sweet tooth.

84 Nguyen Cong Tru, DI
6295 9087
10am - 9pm

Cheesecake Ngon 🍷 Oi's Pick

Cheesecake Ngon is a small boutique-style cheesecake shop. They use only top quality local and imported ingredients that give their cakes their signature smooth, creamy taste. They can provide cheesecakes for all occasions: birthdays, functions, cafe/restaurant supply or even just a single slice. With a range of flavors including passionfruit, raspberry, strawberry, lemon, coconut and of course original and a price starting at VND40,000 per slice.

44 Trung Quyen, D3
www.cheesecakesnow.com
3610 0211

Fly Cupcake

The shop specializes in various flavors of cupcakes.

74E Hai Ba Trung, DI
06 Pham Ngoc Thach, DI
www.flycupcake.vn

Givral

The cakes and tradition of this unique cake shop have captivated generations of Vietnamese customers. With many outlets throughout the city, this particular store was reopened in 2010 on its original site at Vincom A, built on the old Eden complex.

171 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 8659
www.saigongivral.com
6am - 10pm

Gourmand Shop

A traditional delicatessen shop featuring

freshly baked baguettes, croissants, chocolate breads, charcuteries, pastries, finest macaroons and other French delicacies prepared daily. Special products imported from France are also available such as French oysters, Damman Freres luxury tea, and a range of authentic products.

Ground floor, Sofitel Saigon Plaza
17 Le Duan, DI
3824 1555

Harvest Baking

Harvest Baking offers a delivery-based bakery service with a charitable focus, teaching young Vietnamese hopefuls how to bake delicious breads and cakes through their food training program.

30 Lam Son, Tan Binh
3547 0577
harvestbaking.net
7am - 5pm Monday-Saturday

Kinh Do Bakery

Kinh Do Bakery makes reasonably priced baked goods to-go, such as cakes and cupcakes, tarts, sandwiches, Vietnamese "banh bao", Western-style hamburgers and mini-pizzas and gelatin-based desserts.

128A Hai Ba Trung, DI
3829 6552
kinhdobakery.vn
6am - 10.30pm

La Doree

Providing patrons with over 50 varieties of cakes, along with a rich sandwich menu from luxurious French-designed premises. La Doree is the best place in town for macaroons.

216 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3822 1718
www.ladoree.com
7am - 9.30pm

L'amour Bakery & Cafe

More than just another bakery, L'amour is the perfect place for those whom are looking for respite from busy HCMC. This patisserie offers a large selection of European cake and pastry, fresh juice and coffee. You will also find pastas, salads, and sandwiches, ideal for lunch time.

Open from 6am - 10:30pm
24 Hai Ba Trung DI

Nhu Lan Bakery

One of the most famous and prestigious local brands of bakeries in the city, Nhu Lan Bakery supplies bakery products, cakes, bread, ham, sausage, poultry, roasted pork, and dried foods.

50 Ham Nghi, DI
3829 2970
www.nhulan.vn
4am - 12am

Pacey Cupcakes

This cozy little bakery features elegant décor and offers 12 kinds of cupcakes daily, located near the cathedral in a hip, modern setting.

53G Nguyen Du, DI
3823 3223
nguyen.tran@paceycupcakes.com
www.paceycupcakes.com
9am - 10pm

Paris Baguette

Korean chain Paris Baguette offers fresh baked products such as cakes, pastries, bread, as well as assorted coffee and

tea drinks. They also serve sandwiches and salads.

Nguyen Thi Minh Khai corner Cao Thang, DI
Vincom Center A, 171 Dong Khoi, DI
2 Cao Thang, D3
www.parisvn.com

Pat'a Chou

French-style bakery with charming décor. Specializing in baguettes, fresh croissants of various varieties, small quiches, and cakes for every occasion.

74B Hai Ba Trung, DI
3824 8179
5am - 10pm

Savouré Bakery

Shops have a wide selection of cookies, sweet and savory breads and cakes including cashew chocolate, taro and orange. Custom cakes can be ordered for weddings and holidays.

Unit E3, 1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre,
135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3914 3773
www.savourebakery.com

Schneider's Cafe & Tea Corner

The bakers at Schneider's offer fresh, healthy, delicious breads, cakes, and pastries, introducing Ho Chi Minh City to eight centuries of German baking tradition.

27 Han Thuyen, DI
2229 6910
www.schneiders-finest.com
9.30am - 9pm

Tous Les Jours

A Korean owned French-style bakery franchise serving fresh baked bread and popular pastries, all baked on-site.

180 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3823 8302
6am - 11pm

bars

Ahoy Beer Club

Recently opened, this nautical themed bar serves local and imported beer along with food served by wait staff in sailor outfits.

79 Nguyen Cong Tru, DI

Allez Boo

A popular bar in Saigon featuring tropical bamboo decor, multiple levels and a DJ spinning funky beats. This unique bar offers a wide range of beers, shakes, spirits cocktails and food throughout the day.

187 Pham Ngu Lao, DI
6291 5424
allezboo@hcm.fpt.vn
24 hours

Alpha

Alpha is a sports bar recently opened on the first level of The Manor. Offers weekly promotions such as Manor Mondays (happy hour all day for Manor residents), Teacher Tuesdays (happy hour all day for teachers), Thirsty Thursdays (two for one on all cocktails), Sport Saturdays (screening sports from around the world) and on Sundays movie nights by the pool and a roast dinner.

The Manor, Level 1, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

Bernie's Bar & Grill

An Irish bar and restaurant serving

international cuisine like pizza, burgers, pasta and more. Celebrate happy hour from 5 to 7pm, and frequently provides live music.

19 Thai Van Lung, DI
3822 1720

Blanchy's Tash

This cocktail lounge is a perfect place to relax with friends, meet with colleagues or just enjoy a cocktail or two. With plenty of seating around the central bar as well as tables for couples or larger groups, plus a more intimate VIP area with comfortable sofas, you will find the right space for any occasion.

95 Hai Ba Trung, DI
www.blanchystash.com
090 902 8293

Blue Gecko

Blue Gecko provides a classic bar experience complete with a pool table, darts board, cold beer and friendly staff. Guests can watch live sports and relax in the comfortable ambience of the bar.

31 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3824 3483
simon@hcm.vnn.vn
www.bluegeckosaiagon.com
4.30pm - 12am

Bootleg DJ Cafe

Modern, moody, and minimalist cafe bar with reasonable prices by day, chic lounge with DJs playing by night. Has a limited menu of sandwiches and other health-conscious Italian fare.

9 Le Thanh Ton, DI
090 760 9202
dorutudose@gmail.com

Boston Sports Bar

Located in the heart of the backpacker area, Boston Sports Bar is open 24 hours and provides guests with a modern bar-going experience. The bar boasts a pool table, live sports on LCD TVs, and western food.

28/4 Bui Vien, DI
6656 6338

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, DI
3823 6838
bromasaigonbar@gmail.com

Cargo Bar

Cargo Bar is a dedicated music and arts venue designed and committed to delivering diverse entertainment, along with a good drink menu.

7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4
www.facebook.com/cargosaiagon

Carmen Bar

Carmen Bar features a small cavern-like entrance with rough rock walls decorated with ambient lighting. With an exclusive range of drinks and cocktails, guests can relax while enjoying tunes from an excellent Flamenco band.

8 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3829 7699

Charm Bar

Unassuming expat bar in the central city

with table soccer and an upstairs floor for private functions. Opens late night.

58 Huynh Thuc Khang, D1
9822 4206
thecharmsg@yahoo.com

Chill Skybar

Offers the most stunning panoramic views of Saigon and a wide range of wines and cocktails personally prepared by Vietnam mixologist Le Thanh Tung. **Rooftop, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1**
www.chillsaigon.com

Cold Beer Club

The bar features Beer of the Day Promotion all day, and also offers a 2 for 1 deal on the beer of the day. Prices start at VND30,000. The upstairs room can accommodate big groups.

64 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 3999

Boudoir Lounge

Designed to look like a lived-in yet immaculately styled Parisien home with plush leather sofas, silk cushions and velvet armchairs, Boudoir Lounge serves up everything from afternoon tea to evening cocktails along with signature dishes for any occasion from informal meals and business lunches to gourmet canapés accompanying evening drinks.

Ground floor, Saigon Sofitel Plaza
17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555

Brotzeit German Bier Bar & Restaurant

The HCMC venue is in the flashy Kumho complex on the edge of the central district, and features a wide 24-meter restaurant frontage on the mezzanine level and a contemporary and chic setting with German-inspired wooden benches and a long wooden bar counter. Serving

authentic Bavarian cuisines and premium beers.

39 Le Duan, D1
9822 4206
brotzeit.co/kumholink

Chilli Pub Saigon 🍷 OI's Pick

A fun place to unwind, with cold drinks, good music (customers can choose the music) friendly staff, light pub food, weekly quiz night (Mondays), darts and televised sport. Try a challenge shot from the big Chilli on the bartop.

104 Ho Tung Mau, D1
09 8376 3372
fifi291182@yahoo.com
4pm-4am

Chu Bar

At this beautiful, laid back venue, tourists and locals alike can sit around Chu's large oval bar or on luxurious padded benches. It has a full cocktail menu as well as a short menu of snacks and sandwiches.

158 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 3907
7am - Midnight

Cloud 9 Rooftop Lounge

Located near Turtle Lake, this stunning bar offers panoramic views of Saigon. Guests can peruse an extensive international wine list or choose from an array of creative cocktails and international beers.

Level 667, Hai Nam Building, 2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc, D3
090 944 5544

Cold Beer Club

The bar features Beer of the Day Promotion all day, and also offers a 2 for 1 deal on the beer of the day. Prices start at VND30,000. The upstairs room can accommodate big groups.

64 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 3999

Eon51

Eon51 includes a fine dining restaurant, a champagne lounge, a cigar bar and a heli pad cocktail bar. Spread on three levels, Eon51 is a destination for bespoke private and corporate events in Saigon.

Levels 51-52, Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
6291 8751
www.eon51.com
7am - 2am

Game On

Opened in July, Game On is Saigon's newest and biggest sports bar that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar also has an extensive drink menu that includes coffees, juices, beers, wines, vodkas and more. Besides being a good place to watch games, Game On also boasts a function room for corporate meetings or private parties.

115 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6251 9898
gameonsaigon@gmail.com
8am till late

Ginger 60

A low-key expat bar with an extensive drink menu and live music in a friendly atmosphere.

60 Ton That Thiep, D1
093 772 1011

Go2

Go2 is a popular nightclub in the backpackers area. This two level bar offers dancing, shisha, and a street-side view with comfortable seating. The bar also has a pool table and extensive western food menu.

187 De Tham, D1
3836 9575

Hair of the Dog

A large space creating an interesting bar with an alfresco sidewalk area downstairs,

and an upper lounge area overlooking the lower bar that allows for a view of the DJ station. If it follows its Hanoi theme, it will be a DJ music-focused nightclub.

194 Bui Vien, D1

Hard Rock Café

Memorabilia from Hard Rock's iconic collection adorns the walls of Hard Rock Café Ho Chi Minh City and there is live music most nights. Located in the Kumho Plaza complex.

39 Le Duan, D1
6291 7595
www.hardrockcafe.vn
11.30am - 2am

Heaven Bar Saigon

Standing out from other nightclubs, Heaven Bar impresses their guests with nice decor in tone of red and blue, a broad range of sparkling drinks, Ladies' night, awesome DJ at weekend, and many exciting events for expats.

8 Le Quy Don, D3
090 534 3316
www.barsaigonheaven.com
5pm - 2am

Ice Blue

A small, atmospheric, emphatically English-style pub, Ice Blue is a popular meeting place for Ho Chi Minh City's expats with reasonably priced drinks, friendly staff and a cozy atmosphere. Great place to play darts.

54 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 2664
3pm - 1am

Kim's Tavern

An expat bar on the edge of the downtown shopping district renowned for friendly, attractive staff, cold beer, and a relaxed 'local pub' environment.

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American Chinese Food
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www.woknroll.vn
SUPER FAST DELIVERY!
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We wok hard for you!
Scan for the full menu
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Baba's Kitchen
164 Bui Vien, District 1
49D Xa Lo Hanoi, District 2
Phone: 083-838-6661 & 083-838-6662
Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food
Halal & vegetarian dishes
Of course we can cater!
order online at vietnammm.com & cat.vn
"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

20 Huynh Thuc Khang, D1
090 777 5141
4pm - 1am

Last Call 🍷 **Oi's Pick**

A fine hole-in-the-wall cocktail bar in the centre of town opposite the Sheraton Hotel, Last Call is a 70's themed lounge with a permanent neon glow. Now one of the most popular expat/hip local late evening bars, with a small deck from which to overlook the nightlife set on Dung Du.

59 Dong Du, D1
3823 3122

Le Pub

In a brawny Australian snub to the effete vestiges of French Colonialism that pervade in Saigon, Le Pub is a hearty Oz-styled pub proudly located in a small alleyway between Pham Ngu Lao and Bui Vien st, Opposite the Chua Au lac arch, where it is a magnet for backpackers and bloke expats. The manager and staff are friendly enough too, I suppose.

175/22 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
3837 7679

www.lepub.org

Lion Brewery and Restaurant

The brewery offers its signature Lion beer, brewed by its German master brewer, who trained in Germany, along with other kinds of beer. The Lion restaurant has two banquet halls that can accommodate 530 persons.

11-13 Cong Trung Lam Son, D1
www.lionsaigon.com

Long Phi

One of the staples in the backpacker district, Long Phi is a no-frills bar that doubles as a cheap diner serving some fairly decent French and European cuisine.

207 Bui Vien, D1
3837 2704

Lush

Lush has a highly distinctive, modern look, with different areas catering to different needs, including a VIP space with plush couches for chatting with hot new friends.

2 Ly Tu Trong, D1
www.lush.com.vn

M52 Bar

A bar catering primarily to foreigners. Offers a simple setting for a night of drinking in the company of friends.

34 Ton That Thiep, D1
3821 0151
5pm - 12am

Miss Saigon 🍷 **Oi's Pick**

Recently opened, this quaint and cozy bar offers great service and delicious cocktails for those looking to quench their thirst after work. Beers start at VND30,000 and cocktails start at VND55,000 with happy hour from 6pm - 8pm where beers cost VND20,000. Open from 6pm to midnight.

8A/ICI Thai Van Lung, D1

Number Five Bar

Number Five Bar has become notorious for its "all you can drink" draught tiger beer offer. Attractive waitresses are always enthusiastic contestants on the billiards table.

44 Pasteur, D1
3915 3150
heinzvm@gmail.com
3pm - 1am

O'Brien's 🍷 **Oi's Pick**

Two-storey Irish-themed bar & restaurant furnished to high standard. O'Brien's promotes a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. Known for its excellent food menu, this is a fun place to socialize while shooting pool, playing darts, or chatting

with the friendly staff.
74/A3 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 3198
www.irish-barsaigon.com

Phatty's

A sports bar offering a selection of ice-cold local and imported beers as well as a complete range of tasty pub food. Central features are the TVs, connected to an extensive sports channel network.

46-48 Ton That Thiep, D1

Purple Jade

Purple Jade is a stylish and chic venue with exceptional world class cocktails by the city's award-winning bartender along with snacks to melt away the bustle of the city.

First floor- InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duuan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon



RED Bar
 RED offers one of the longest Happy Hours in Saigon, from 9am - 9pm, with live music available from Monday - Saturday. This multi-level bar has a non-smoking floor and a function room along with a top quality pool table and soft-tip dart machines. A menu of Eastern and Western dishes also includes wood-fire pizzas.
70-72 Ng Duc Ke, District 1
2229 7017

Saigon Saigon Bar

In wartime Saigon, the rooftop of the Caravelle hotel was one of the most popular drinking holes in the city for foreign journalists and expat embassy staff - and it remains one of the most sought-out casual tourist attractions in the city today. Panoramic views of Saigon can still be obtained on the garden terrace despite all the construction, and efforts have been made to preserve the original character of the venue with its multiple ceiling fans, subdued decor, and quietly romantic atmosphere with oil candles on the table tops.

19 Lam Son Square, D1
3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com/en/1/15/325/products.aspx

Saigon Retro 🍷 **Oi's Pick**

One of the newest expat bars on the block, offering friendly bar service. Live sport on screen, including English Premier League.

113 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6278 2349
4pm - 2am

Shots Bar

A corner bar on Bui Vien that, along with drinks, serves a variety of food such as seafood, pork and chicken dishes.

207 Bui Vien, D1

Slate

Slate takes its name from the dark grey slate tiling that covers the floor of the entire establishment. A modern, relaxing spot for an after-dinner drink with an extensive martini list and delicious BBQ

menu. A tad difficult to find above a BMW dealership, but accessible from the hotel it is worth the effort.

3rd Floor, Moevenpick Hotel, 253 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan
3844 9222
5pm - 11pm

Spotted Cow

Hearty breakfasts, great pub grub, cheap drinks and the latest sport on TV make this an appealing destination for tourists of all budgets. Located in the heart of the backpacker district.

111 Bui Vien, D1
3920 7670
spottedcow@alfrescosgroup.com
11am - 12pm

Storm P

Storm P restaurant and bar is named after the famous Danish cartoonist Robert Storm Petersen, and it's the only Danish restaurant in Vietnam.

5B Nguyen Sieu, D1
3827 4738
www.stormp.vn
10am - late

Vasco's

Stylish bar, restaurant and cocktail lounge in a converted colonial style house. European and Asian fare downstairs with extensive wine list and cocktails. DJs perform upstairs at night.

74/7D Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 2888
www.vascosgroup.com

Wine Embassy

For those looking to relax and enjoy a glass of wine after work, Wine Embassy is the perfect place with wine specialists and an interactive menu to help you pair your wine with crafted food.

13 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3824 7827
www.wineembassy.com.vn
4pm till late
11am - late

Xu Bar

A cocktail hot spot with Coconut Martinis, Cranelo Sparkles and Passion Fruit Caprioska on offer along with a variety of tapas with DJs and drink specials throughout the week.

71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.xusaigon.com

cafés

ABC Bakery & Cafe

ABC Bakery & Cafe has over 30 different kinds of baked goods such as baguettes, danishes, whole cakes, sliced cakes and even pizza. Together with its range of baked items, it is also has Western and Vietnamese coffee and juices.

223 - 225 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
www.abcbnc.com

Achaya Cafe

Achaya Cafe have two floors providing a nice atmosphere for meeting, relaxation or party. The menu is extensive with drinks and Western, Japanese, Vietnamese food from sandwiches, spaghetties, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.

90 Le Loi, D1
093 897 2050
11am - 10:30pm

Aisha Lounge

Aisha offers a menu studded with various Vietnamese drinks and food - although the belly dance show does evoke the spirit of the interior design.

63/1 Pasteur, D1

6660 9040
www.aishalounge.com

AQ Coffee

Beautiful café situated in one of the city's oldest French mansions, serving coffee made with traditionally-roasted coffee beans.

32 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 8344
7.30am - 11.30pm

Angel-in-us Coffee

A sophisticated and classy coffee franchise with exemplary attention to detail, Angel-in-us has a pretty angel wing motif and a quality coffee menu.

145 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3827 8588
facebook.com/angelinuscoffeevn

Blue Cafe

A sprawling, unique cafe in Go Vap, with indoor-outdoor seating and an attempt to recreate the appeal of rural Dalat. Enjoy the shade inside, or sit outside amidst the greenery and watch aircraft taking off from Ton Sat airport. Extensive menu and broad range of coffees and chilled drinks.

701-703 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3588 6824
www.mtvcafe.com.vn
7am - 11pm

Bobby Brewer's

A contemporary cafe in the backpacker area set over three floors, the cafe features a large free cinema, a great place for couples.

45 Bui Vien, D1
3920 4090
www.bobbybrewers.com

Boulevard Cafe

This Parisian-style cafe has a fine, white tone and a warm ambiance that attempts a look of luxury with its plush sofas and chandeliers.

98 Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan

Bukafe - Cafe

This quaint cafe offers a Japanese style setting with chairs that have you seated on the ground. While offering elegant drinks and tasty simple dishes, make sure to catch the live bands. It won't set you back much either with inexpensive drinks.

43 Nguyen Huu Cau, D1
090 265 2635
bukafe.cafetruyen@gmail.com

Café Ban Sonate

Cafe Ban Sonate is a peaceful haven, tucked away from the boisterous noise of the city. This cafe offers elegant decor along with indoor and outdoor seating options.

53 Dang Dung, D1
3290 6004

Caffe Fresco

A new player on the scene currently battling for supremacy in the coffee chain market, Fresco offers a wide range of espresso and local coffees, juices and smoothies.

121 Le Loi, D1
3821 1009
www.fresco.com.vn

Café Terrace

Cafe Terrace is a popular modern cafe/restaurant in the chic Saigon Center. This cozy, dimly lit cafe offers customers a long outdoor terrace with views of the bustling

pedestrian and traffic scene. A second cafe is located on the first floor amongst fashion stores.

Ground Floor & First Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI

Cafe Vuon Kieng

Cafe Vuon Kieng is a quiet, casual cafe near the banks of the Saigon River, boasting relaxing views and refreshing breezes. This riverside cafe offers jasmine tea, coffee, ice cream, beer, even cocktails.

**10B Ton Duc Thang, DI
3823 3279**

Cake Durian Duro

A chain of cafes selling durian inspired crepes and buns with prices under VND100,000.

**Kiosk in Le Thi Rieng Park, 875 Cach Mang Thang 8, DI0
093 333 9365
www.banhsaurieng.com**

Centrofarms Coffee

This recently opened cafe, located near the airport, sells its own eponymous brand of Centrofarm organic roasted beans direct from Dalat with indoor and outdoor seating that's perfect for people watching and getting your daily dose of caffeine.

19 Ut Tich, Tan Binh

Chi's Cafe

Chi's Café is a restaurant serving both Western and Vietnamese food in the backpacker area. The menu is extensive, with everything from sandwiches and pizzas to their popular baked potatoes with filling.

**40/31 Bui Vien, DI
3836 7622**

Ciao Cafe

An icon in downtown HCMC, Ciao cafe features two floors serving simple food, coffee, smoothies and ice cream – and an opulent lounge bar on the top floor. Antique tiles mix with velvet curtains and stylish paintings to make this a memorable chill out environment.

**74-76 Nguyen Hue, DI
40 Ngo Duc Ke, DI**

Cosmo Lounge

Cosmo Lounge is a popular location for stylish and trendy locals and expats alike. Chill out in a bold blue and white environment with local and European cafe food and a broad selection of coffees and drinks.

**86 Bis Le Thanh Ton, DI
3823 5848**

Cooku's Nest

Cooku's nest has a clean, artsy vibe offering drinks and snacks.

**13 Tu Xuong, D3
2241 2043**

Crêperie & Café

Inexpensive Western fare targeted mainly at locals, delivering some fairly decent low-cost sandwiches.

5 Han Thuyen, DI

Cryptic Acoustic Cafe

Cryptic Acoustic Cafe features an architecture that blends classic and modern elements. Featured drinks include Cryptic frappe (the combination of coffee and Orion cake, banana and fresh cream), Cryptic soda (soda, flavored orange peel, lemon and fresh cream) and Cryptic yogurt (with yogurt, mango, strawberry, peach).

This place also holds acoustic and art performances.

343/6 To Hien Thanh, DI0

DeJa Vu Cafe

It is easy to mistake this cafe for someone's home as the tranquil atmosphere will have you tension free in no time. The peaceful setting is ideal for dates or low-key social events. Make sure to catch the live bands that frequent the cafe.

**314/2 Dien Bien Phu, DI0
6276 6966
info@dejavu.vn**

Elle Cafe

Keeping in line with the sense of style that comes along with the Elle fashion label brand, the menu and décor of Elle Cafe sets it apart from the competition.

**Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower, 45 Ngo Duc Ke, DI
6291 8766**

Fa Cafe

Fa Cafe brings you all kinds of scrumptious coffee, along with Vietnamese food and dessert. It offers breakfast, lunch, dinner and offers delivery as well. The interior is a mix of alternative and fancy, with wooden furniture, soft backrest pillows and decorative paintings.

**26 Ly Tu Trong, DI
090 878 3788
www.facebook.com/fecafe.vn
7:30am - 11pm**

Geisha's Coffee and Tea House

Experience a funky, relaxed atmosphere with a refreshing drinks & delicious snack at Geisha Coffee and Tea House. A retreat away from the hustle and bustle of the streets of Saigon.

**85 Pasteur, DI
3829 4004
www.geishacafe.com**

Gemmi Coffee

This cafe serves a variety of food like salads, chicken dish alongside coffees and other beverages. Provides live solo piano music every night from 8pm.

193 D3 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3

Hatvala

This tea house, coffee shop and restaurant offers selected, quality Vietnamese tea and coffee to drink or to buy as leaves and beans. They also have a delightful all day casual dining area in their stylish bistro.

**44 Nguyen Hue, DI
3824 1534
8am - 11pm
hatvalavietnam@gmail.com
www.hatvala.com
www.facebook.com/hatvala**

Hi-End Coffee

Located near the leafy Tao Dan Park, Hi-End Coffee is one of a few venues serving up just as much music as caffeine.

**126 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
3824 1004
Open to 10pm**

Gloria Jean's

Australia's most popular coffee franchise now has a solid presence in Ho Chi Minh City with multiple locations in the inner city. While the favourite Dong Khoi address has now been given over to a Sony store, new venues in Vincom A and at CMT8 prove this favourite brand with locals and expats alike is steadily growing in Vietnam.

**2 bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
www.gloriajeanscoffees.com/vn**

Highlands Coffee

With over 50 cafes in Vietnam, Highlands Coffee serves up international and traditional Vietnamese blends. Coffee lovers can also find Highlands premium quality blends in selected hotels and supermarkets.

Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, DI

i-Box Cafe

iBox cafe is a unique, cafe with aristocratic decor. This decorative cafe specializes in red wine, Asian dishes and spaghetti. They also offer an extensive selection of ice cream creations.

**135 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3825 6718**

ID Cafe

Separated from the bustle of nearby Ben Thanh Market by a tiny alleyway, ID is a retro cafe opening a door to an earlier Saigon.

34D Thu Khoa Huan, DI

Imagine Coffee shop

One of the walls of this rustic cafe is literally covered with books. An easy place to get lost for an evening with prices below VND100,000.

**58 Ho Bieu Chanh, Phu Nhuan
090 956 0105
www.facebook.com/ImagineCafeShop
09 0956 0105
nguyenmaihoa@gmail.com
8am - 10pm**

Kebab Cafe

The healthiest kebab! Featuring an excellent homemade white sauce, fresh veggies and chicken or pork marinated without oil. The French owner also serves savory and sweet crepes and a home-made puree.

**538/2/8 Doan Van Bo, D4
01648 805 915
contact@kebab-cafe.com
www.kebab-cafe.com
10am - 10pm**

Kem My

This quiet ice cream shop is the perfect place for families and couples to indulge their sweet tooth. It offers a fresh release from the heat of Ho Chi Minh City.

**11 Duong 41, D4
093730 3030
www.kemmy.vn
3.30pm - 11pm**

Kesera

A cozy and friendly café/bar serving coffee, beer, wines, freshly-baked homemade cakes and delicious Western food.

**26/1 Le Thanh Ton, DI
keserakesera.com**

Kopi Beans

Kopi Beans Cafe is a favorite among high school kids. It's a small takeaway coffee shop with cheap espresso and iced coffees.

206 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3

L'amour

A stylish bakery and cafe new to Hai Ba Trung, in the city centre, L'amour specialises in cakes and desserts and serves Illy Coffee. Eat in or take away.

**24 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3520 8180
www.lamourbakery.com
L'Anmien Dining Cafe**

Linked to the luxurious Mui Ne hotel of the same name, this internationally-styled sidewalk café is a place to relax and enjoy the cool air and watch the busy inner-city traffic from a more refined vantage.

**76A Le Lai, DI
38212718**

LightBox Cafe

This stunningly designed cafe also doubles as an event and photography studio, so make sure you dress to impress at this location because you never know who might snap your picture. They also serve vegetarian cuisine with prices ranging between VND300,000 - VND500,000

**179 Hoa Lan, Phu Nhuan
3517 6668
www.lightbox.vn**

L'Usine

L'Usine is a retail, café and gallery space occupying two locations in the center of DI. Its retail space is dedicated to Vietnamese designers and more established brands from abroad as well as stocking a wide range of stationary and home ware items. The café in both locations serves international fare and a range of pastries and the ever popular Sweet & Sour Cupcakes.

**151/1 Dong Khoi, DI
70B Le Loi, DI
www.lusinespace.tumblr.com
9am - 9pm**

Le Tokyo Baum

Popular Japanese cake cafe with quiet seating area, specializing in orange cakes.

**46 Nguyen Van Trang, DI
3926 0388**

May Coffee

A superb, friendly, and inexpensive little café most notable for its perfect view of the Cathedral tower bells and close proximity to the post office.

**1 Cong Xa Paris, DI
3827 7099
www.maycoffee.com**

Minhu Coffee

This specialty cafe offers a wood furniture interior setting, which resembles the cabins you would expect to see in the western North American frontier. Live bands are a regular feature at the cozy cafe and prices are inexpensive.

**149/35 Le Thi Rieng, DI
3601 9319**

MTV Cafe

Providing a relaxing atmosphere after a hard day's work with some of the top hits out today, MTV cafe is the perfect place to unwind with that special someone or just a cup of coffee.

**65 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 2597
mtvcafe.com.vn**

MZ Coffee

A cafe in a colonial villa that was built in the early 20th century. It boasts a broad selection of coffee, from fine Vietnamese condensed milk coffee to Italian Lavazza espresso, cappuccinos and lattes as well as wines and beers.

**56-56 A Bui Thi Xuan, DI
39255258
www.m-zing.com**

NYDC

A fun, dynamic and cosmopolitan place for food, desserts, beverages and not forgetting the company of good friends. Prices range between VND100,000 - VND300,000.

Diamond Plaza, 34 Le Duan, D1
 3822 9992
 www.nycd.com.vn



Onset Cafe

  This lounge cafe features live bands and is a good setting for work events or business meetings. With bold interior furniture it is a popular respite for Ho Chi Minh residents.
319 Ly Thuong Kiet, D11
 6670 7092
 onsetcoffee@yahoo.com.vn



Paris Deli

  A French style cafe serving some of the best pastries in Saigon, this cheerful spot is a real slice of Parisian life. Many European drinks and dishes.
Ground Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
 3821 6127


Passio Coffee to Go

  Passio Coffee offers its guests fine Italian style coffee made from the finest ingredients. Since Passio's inception in 2006, this enthusiastic team of coffee brewers has become recognized by international coffee drinkers.
112 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3

Phuong Cac Cafe

  With indoor and outdoor lounge areas this cafe is a relaxing respite from the grind of Ho Chi Minh City. With live bands and drinks under VND100,000 it makes for the perfect getaway.
Bis 213 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
 3932 7484

Phuc Minh Coffee

 Phuc Minh coffee is an airy, clean environment providing a varied menu and delicious coffee. The staff is attentive and quick with a friendly approach. Prices start around VN 25,000 for this simple cafe.
51 Hung Phuoc 4, D7

Princess and the Pea

 A fairytale-themed venue for the dreamers of Ho Chi Minh City, hidden away in a tiny alleyway off Pasteur. Discover it if you can.
63/18 Pasteur, D1

Retrobite Diner Cafe

Inspired by the concept of 1960s Americana, bi-level Retrobite Diner Cafe features an interior that includes booths, retro egg chairs, jukebox and classic radio players. The menu is mostly American food with sandwiches, hamburgers, pastas, steaks, milkshakes, waffles and more.
6 Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
 3521 0673
 retrobite.vn@gmail.com
 7:30am - 11pm


Soho Coffee

  Two level local cafe chain serving light meals, coffee and local chilled drinks.
185 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
 3839 5038
 7am - 11pm

Starbucks Coffee


 Has a large, open ground floor space with ample seating in booths and tables, and a smaller space upstairs with views out on the busy Nga 6 Phu Dong roundabout. Also has outdoor seating. Expect to pay Western prices.
76 Le Lai, D1

Stella Restaurant & Cafe

 Providing authentic Italian and Vietnamese food using fresh imported and local premium-quality ingredients. Where else can you find such good

coffee/cuisine at such reasonable prices?
119-121 Bui Vien, D1
 3836 9220
 www.stellacaffe.com

The Blue Cafe

 A spacious cafe divided into two different areas with a lush, outdoor garden seating lounge and an air conditioned in-door lounge. The Blue Cafe has live music with drinks under VND100,000.
701-703 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
 3588 6824

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

  Offering over 22 varieties of coffee and 20 kinds of tea, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf has been serving the best coffees and teas from around the world for more than 40 years in its cozy, handcrafted oak paneled stores.
 www.coffeebean.com.vn
 7am - 11pm
39 Le Duan, D1
Ground Floor, Crescent Mall
Ton Dat Tien, D7
157-159 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1
39 Le Duan, D1
12-14 Thai Van Lung, D1
94 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
235 Dong Khoi, D1
1-5 Le Duan, D1
60-62 Cach Mang Thang 8, D3
1-3 Phan Chu Trinh, D1


The Library

The Library provides a welcoming atmosphere for those in search of tranquility, comfort and great drinks in the heart of Saigon
Ground floor - InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
 3520 9099
 www.intercontinental.com/saigon



Tram Coffee

 A unique romantic cafe experience hidden well off the beaten track, but close to District 1 in neighbouring Phu Nhuan District. Sip a coffee, juice or beer or indulge in good cafe food over candlelight in a dark, intimate environment hidden amongst trees and trickling streams. Relax in an air conditioned room or dine alfresco amongst the greenery. The perfect spot to impress a date with your local knowledge.
100 Tran Huy Lieu St, Phu Nhuan
 2240 5306

The Myth Cafe

  Escape the daily grind of Ho Chi Minh City with a trip into the mystical setting of Myth Cafe. With live bands and prices under VND100,000 it's no wonder The Myth cafe is one of the best around.
176 Dien Bien Phu, D3
 3820 9735
 thuyhangmtv@yahoo.com

Trung Nguyen Cafe

  One of the most ubiquitous coffee brands in Vietnam. With a burgeoning presence throughout the city, it's hard to go anywhere without tripping over a Trung Nguyen cafe - serving gourmet Vietnamese street coffee.
26B-C Le Loi, D1

The Serenata Cafe


 The Serenata Cafe is a peaceful, relaxing oasis in a French Colonial house. This cafe embraces nature with plants, fishponds, and small fountains, and offers music in the evenings.
6D Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
 3930 7436

Vecchio Cafe

The interior features Italian ornate decor, dim lighting and antique furniture,

enhanced by Italian music. Offerings include pasta, soup, chicken dishes, salad, beef dishes, gelato and beverages such as smoothies, fresh fruit juices and tea.
39/3 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3

Windows

 A highly fashionable cafe near the cathedral. For many years, this eye-catching venue has remained a place to see and be seen, often frequented by the famous, the well-to-do, and the ne'er do well.
12 Alexandre De Rhodes, D1
 38238408

Yogen Fruz

Serves frozen yogurt with 20 different kinds of fruits for you to choose from. This place also provides an environment where customers can relax and be social.
B3-15B Basement Vincom Center B, 72 Le Thanh Ton, D1
 www.yogenfruz.com.vn

Zoom Cafe

 This distinctive Vespa-themed Cafe has been a popular fixture in D1 for ten years. Today, the cafe serves as the place for Vespa enthusiasts and tour veterans to swap stories over ice-cold beers and what many claim is the best selection of mouth-watering burgers, paninis, and baguette sandwiches in town.
169A Bui Vien, D1
 3920 3897

chinese

Dragon Court

  Dragon Court is a large restaurant opposite the Opera House in Saigon's bustling District 1. Enjoy Chinese dishes from many regions with dishes like glass noodles, hot pot, and a large dim sum collection.
11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
 3827 2566

Dynasty

  New World hotel's in-house Chinese restaurant is certainly a venue of fine contemporary Chinese dining. The chef offers a variety of authentic Cantonese dishes along with classic dim sum under a high lantern/chandelier-lit ceiling, in a broad dining room decorated in classic Chinese style. VIP guests can dine in one of four semi-private or three totally private rooms.
New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, D1
 3822 8888
 www.saigon.newworldhotels.com

Hung Ky Mi Gia

   Hung Ky Mi Gia is a famous and long-standing restaurant with more than 13 years of operation. It serves traditional Chinese cuisine with authentic dishes such as roasted chicken, duck, and pork.
20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
 3822 2673

Kabin

  Kabin is a Cantonese restaurant specializing in exotic dishes such as baked duck tongue, grouper cutlet, and lobster soup. Located in the five star Renaissance Riverside Hotel, this restaurant offers a wide variety of dim sum.
Renaissance Riverside Hotel,
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
 3822 0033

Li Bai Chinese Restaurant

Located in the Sheraton Hotel, Li Bai offers a selection of over 50 dim sum dishes as well as traditional Chinese and Cantonese specialties. Diners will enjoy

the relaxed, upscale ambiance provided by the wood paneling and oriental art.
Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1
 3827 2828
 www.libaisaigon.com

Ming Court

  Since the Nikko Hotel graced the Saigon skyline, the venue has managed to set the standard for classy, five-star dining with its bold grey modern decor and Japanese-style efficiency. Ming Court, on the hotel's third floor, is a large Chinese restaurant with all the expected graces of the Orient belonging to the exotic fantasy of the dynastic era.
3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
 3925 7777



Ocean Palace

A place for those who love Chinese food. The large dining room on the ground floor can accommodate up to 280 diners. Up on the first floor are six private rooms and a big ballroom that can host 350 guests.
2 Le Duan Street, D1
 3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

It's worth traipsing out to D6 for this one. Not only are the Dim Sum, Peking Duck, and pan-China home-style cuisine exemplary, but the venue design, with its architectural flourishes from the seven wonders of the world (including the Great Wall, the Taj Mahal, and the pyramids) makes for a highly distinctive dining experience.
12 Duong 26, D6
 3755 1577
 www.7kyquan.com

Shang Palace Restaurant

  The slightly off-centre, high-class Norfolk Mansion Hotel on Ly Tu Trong is home to one of Saigon's most well-respected Chinese restaurants outside of Chinatown. Located on the 1st floor, Shang's dark intricate wooden tables and chairs with white linen and deep red carpeting make for an atmosphere of moody opulence; there is seating for over 300 guests, and private rooms are available.
1st Floor, Norfolk Mansion
17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, D1
 3823 2221

Shi-Fu Dim sum

   ShiFu Dim Sum House is a restaurant specializing in dim sum, with modern Chinese decor and over 68 dim sum dishes.
139A Nguyen Trai, D1
 3925 1111
 www.dimsumhouse.vn

Yu Chu

Yu chu is renowned for the quality and presentation of its authentic Cantonese and Peking cuisines along with its elegant decor. Watching the chefs prepare signature dishes such as hand-pulled noodle, dim sum and Peking duck right in the kitchen is a prominent dining feature here.
First floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
 3520 9099
 www.intercontinental.com/saigon

french

Annamite

Annamite specializes in French cuisine within a modern setting.
21 Tu Xuong, D3
 6277 8332
 www.annamite-restaurant.com

Au Manoir de Khai

  Au Manoir de Khai is an authentic, first class French restaurant. Guests can enjoy traditional French cuisine in this classic 100 year old villa. Their menu is extensive

and features dishes like Kobe beef, foie gras, red grouper, and truffle mushrooms.
251 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3930 3394

Augustin

Augustin is a romantic and charming French restaurant located just steps away from the Rex Hotel. Serves lunches and dinners and offers 10 percent discount on a la carte menu items.
10D Nguyen Thiep, D1
www.augustinrestaurant.com

Bon Appetit

A small French-Vietnamese fusion bistro on Pham Ngoc Thach with a simplistic charm enhanced by a fine selection of old-style French music.
78 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
090 789 8345

Bonjour Restaurant

Bonjour serves up international dishes with a French flair. The large menu of main courses feature roast duck, salmon, lamb and steak with specialties being ostrich and venison.
150/26 Nguyen Trai, D1
3926 0699

Cordon Blue

A unique French venue decorated with blue and green shades serving high-quality French cuisine on the outskirts of the inner city.
38 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
3822 5216
www.cordonblue.vn

La Cuisine

This ultra-fine little bistro is an exercise in minimalism with its twenty seats and bare, chic-rustic interior of wooden furnishings and black & white photographs on whitewashed walls. Its warm lighting and clean atmosphere belies a certain sophistication, however, and the price of the fare is significantly damaging enough to make this a rare treat for those not in the restaurant's fabulously wealthy target market.
48 Le Thanh Ton, D1
2229 8882
www.lacuisine.com.vn

La Creperie

La Creperie is the first authentic Brittany French restaurant that serves savory galettes, sweet crepes with tasty seafood and the best apple cider in Saigon.
1777 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3824 7070
infosgn@lacreperie.com.cn
Mon-Sun 11am-11pm

La Fourchette

Small and cozy, La Fourchette is a favorite amongst the French expat community. The vintage posters and wood paneling add to the charm of this French eatery located downtown, a stone's throw from the Saigon River.
9 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 8143
www.lafourchette.com.vn

La Nicoise

A small, friendly French bistro with about a dozen tables, La Nicoise serves up typical French dishes under the watchful eye of its French-Vietnamese owners.
56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3821 3056

L'essentiel

L'essentiel offers a quiet intimate dining experience downstairs with space for private functions and alfresco dining on an upper floor. The menu changes weekly, the food is fresh and the wine list carefully collated.
98 Ho Tung Mau, D1
0948 415 646

Le Bordeaux

Set in a French colonial-style mansion, Le Bordeaux serves southwestern French cuisine in a beautiful setting. Known for its foie gras and large selection of wines, Le Bordeaux is worth the trip to Binh Thanh district.

72 D2 Street, Binh Thanh
3899 9831
restaurant-lebordeaux.com.vn
11.30am - 1.30pm; 6.30am - 9.30pm

Le Bouchon De Saigon

Red and white checked tablecloths and closely set tables make Le Bouchon de Saigon the place to go for a casual, classic French bistro experience under the eye of iron chef Vietnam winner David Thai.

40 Thai Van Lung, D1
www.lebouchondesaignon.com

Le Chateau de Saigon

Situated in a small but romantic French villa, Le Chateau De Saigon Restaurant is designed to accommodate any kind of event. Whether it is dinner with family and friends, or a passionate evening with your loved one, Le Chateau De Saigon will provide a sophisticated and memorable dining experience.

45A Le Quy Don, D3
www.lechateaudesaigon.com

Le Jardin

Le Jardin is a gorgeous enclosed garden space that allows eaters to follow the example of the French colonists a century ago and pretend they're actually in Paris. Whether dining outside under the shaded terrace or within the old, warmly-lit villa, the cuisine, decor, and general mood of the place is like a Stargate direct to France.

31D Thai Van Lung, D1
3825 8465

Le Paris

Le Paris has an interior that features depictions of Eiffel Tower, Seine River and Notre Dame Cathedral. Food offerings include French, seafood, steaks and vegetarian dishes.

45 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.facebook.com/leparisrestaurant

Le Steak de Saigon

Drawing inspiration from French steakhouses, Le Steak de Saigon serves imported and local meats, with beef fondue and table-side beef tartare as the most recommended. Aside from table service, the restaurant offers take-out and delivery as well.

15 Dong Du, D1
3822 4593
www.lesteakdesaignon.com

L'Olivier

L'Olivier is a restaurant serving authentic Mediterranean cuisines, located on the 2nd floor of the Hotel Sofitel.

Sofitel Saigon Plaza, 17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555
www.sofitel.com

Le Rendez-Vous de Saigon

A new wine bistro that offers a warm and friendly atmosphere. Unwind either in their stylish downstairs bar, or lounge on cozy leather seating in the upstairs section with a balcony overlooking a courtyard in an alley. The venue offers a tasty selection of wines from France to South Africa, and a delectable menu of French cuisine.

9A Ngo Van Nam, D1
www.lerendezvousdesaignon.com
6291 0396

The Refinery

This Parisian bistro hidden away in its enclave on Hai Ba Trung is an exceptional venue, making for an elegant reparation of the sins of the past. It was here in French Colonial days that opium was manufactured, bringing ruin to the people of Asia; it is here that a far softer side of the French culture now exercises its influence over present-day Saigon, serving modern European cuisine in its

tastefully decorated dining area and airy outdoor patio.

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 7667
www.therefinerysaigon.com

Ty Coz

An unpretentious venue focused only on serving great cuisine. Ty Coz provides a fine balcony view of the cathedral, intimate atmosphere, and affordable prices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1
3822 2457
www.tycozsaigon.com

Vatel Saigon Restaurant

This is a fine, well-managed, and even luxurious dining venue serving authentic French cuisine in a Franco-Viet design space. There's red carpet along the entrance way, gallery-standard art on the walls, and an overall atmosphere of refinement and good service.

120 bis Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
08 5404 2220
vatelsaigon.com

indian

Ashoka

Ashoka is one of the city's most popular and enduring Indian restaurants with a reputation for good food with a wide range of North Indian culinary dishes at a reasonable price. Large space for private parties, outdoor catering and free home delivery also available. Special set lunch veg/non-veg from VND90,000 upwards. Promotion (free trip to Cambodia) and discount available for people booking in groups.

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 1372
www.ashokavietnam.com

Baba's Kitchen

Baba's Kitchen, also known as the best Indian restaurant on Bui Vien, is familiar among expats and locals alike, rating 4.5 out of five stars on Trip Advisor. Their vindaloo is a must try.

164 Bui Vien, D1
3838 6661
www.babaskitchen.in
11am - 11pm

Bollywood

Complete North & South Indian Cuisine. Special Chaat & Tandoori Dishes. Parties, Events & catering service available, Daily Lunch tiffin and Set menus.

Free Delivery(All Phu my Hung)
22131481 - 22450096
0938069433
Hotline: 0906357442(English)
bollywoodvietnam@gmail.com
facebook: bollywoodvietnamindiancuisine
(for complete menu)

Bombay Indian Restaurant

Located in D1 near the Ben Thanh Market area, serving Indian & Halal cuisine. The ambiance is relaxed thanks to Bombay's easy-going, family kitchen vibe.

57-59 Ham Nghi, D1
9am - 10.30pm

Ganesh

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

15B4 Le Thanh Ton, D1
8223 0173
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com

Indus Indian

Indus Indian is a relatively new Indian restaurant in Saigon providing all the classic Indian favorites. Operated by a dedicated husband/wife duo, this restaurant specializes in Halal food.

2G Thi Sach, D1
3521 0324

Mumtaz

With bona-fide Indian owners and chefs, authenticity at Mumtaz is guaranteed. While the service and setting is relatively basic, the food is amongst the best of its type in the city in terms of taste alone. The brand has a second branch in Da Nang city if you're ever on holiday and missing your curries.

226 Bui Vien, D1
3837 1767

The Punjabi

Authentic North Indian cuisine prepared in a home-made tandoori oven makes Punjabi a popular spot for budget conscious eaters who crave Indian standbys like spinach naan and chicken tandoori.

40/3 Bui Vien, D1
3508 3777

italian

1960 Presidential Club

1960 Presidential Club is a member-only restaurant with an interior design inspired by Saigon in the 60s. You will experience more traditional style of Italian cuisine with an extensive menu led by chef Franco Buresi.

Floor 22 Sailing Tower, 111A Pasteur, D1
www.club1960.vn

Basilico Restaurant

Trattoria-style Italian eatery Basilico specializes in homespun recipes. Contemporary décor, casual ambiance, and casual yet attentive Bistro-style service makes it a relaxing dinner venue.

Ground floor, on the Corner of Nguyen Du & Le Van Huu, D1
3520 9099
6.30am - 10.30pm

Capricciosa

You'll find the standards here – pizza, pasta, soups, salads, with a few special dishes such as calamari and onion in squid ink sauce. They're all prepared according to strict Japanese standards, and the result is actually really good.

Booth B3-03A, Level B3
Vincom Tower, 70 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3993 9786
www.capricciosa.com.vn

Casa Italia

Italian owned & run, Casa Italia's menu ranges from home-style cooking that includes steaks, seafood, a large variety of homemade pastas, jumbo salads, appetizers and the best pizzas.

86 Le Loi, D1
3824 4286
www.casaitalia.com.vn



Ciao Bella

Hearty home-style 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
3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.saigonrestaurantgroup.com/ciao



Chef Mamma's

Chef Mamma's is located at Saigon's Superbowl Center offering a variety of Italian and Asian food. The restaurant opens from early in the morning until late at night serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

A43 Truong Son, Tan Binh



Da Vinci's

Da Vinci's is an Italian-American style pizzeria delivery offering pizzas, lasagna, spaghetti, calzones, salads and desserts. Their full menu is online at www.davinicivietnam.com. Free delivery to Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and Phu My Hung. **Open 11am - 10pm.** Call 083 943 4982 or SMS your order to 093 328 4624



Good Morning Vietnam

Italian restaurant with a unique menu including traditional Italian dishes. The restaurant is conveniently located in a beautiful old house in the heart of Saigon, well integrated in the local architecture. 197 De Tham, DI 3837 1894 www.thegoodmorningvietnam.com

La Hostaria

Designed with an intimate atmosphere involving something like an Italian town, this venue focuses on traditional ethnic Italian cuisine (rather than the ubiquitous pizza and pasta), creations of the skillful executive chef – straight out of Venice. The place lights up on romantic Thursday evenings with candlelight and light music. 17B Le Thanh Ton, DI 3823 1080 www.lahostaria.com

Lucca Oi's Pick

A Brooklyn-style Italian eatery upstairs with an adjoining bar. Downstairs is a relaxing cafe offering generous breakfasts, simple cafe fare for lunch and some of the best espresso coffee you'll find in the city. 88 Ho Tung Mau, DI 3915 3692 8am - 11pm

Margherita

Well-reviewed overseas, Margherita is a familiar place to tourists trawling the nooks of Ho Chi Minh City. This is partly a result of its agreeable price, sumptuous Western-style pizzas, English-speaking staff, and more than average customer service. 175/1 Pham Ngu Lao, DI 3837 0760

Opera

Located at Park Hyatt Hotel, Opera is a contemporary, casual trattoria-style restaurant that specializes in authentic pizza made fresh from a wood-fired oven, pasta and homemade Italian dishes prepared from one large open kitchen. Park Hyatt Hotel, 2 Lam Son Square, DI 3520 2357

Pendolasco

There leafy garden is perfect for all those people looking for some fresh air away from the hustle and bustle of the city. It

also has a fully air-conditioned dining room. Offers large selection of Italian wines and Italian dishes such as wood fire oven pizzas, pastas, grilled food, among others.

87 Nguyen Hue, DI www.pendolasco.vn

Pizza 4P's Oi's Pick

A little treasure hidden away at the top of an out-of-the-way alley off Le Thanh Ton, this Japanese pizzeria is a major hit with those in the know. Highly attractive premises and some extraordinary toppings catering to all tastes make this an unmissable pizza experience.

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

Pomodoro

In this family-style, simply-decorated trattoria restaurant with an arched ceiling and an all-brick interior, a fine Italian menu pleases diners with 12 different pizzas along with pasta dishes, parma ham with a spicy tomato chutney, and a highly-recommended French onion soup. Ideal option for a simple, reliable, and thoroughly pleasant night out with no complications.

79 Hai Ba Trung, DI 3823 8998 www.pomodoro-vietnam.com

Sarpino's Pizzeria

Sarpino's Pizzeria provides authentic Italian pizzas made from gourmet ingredients.

125 Ho Tung Mau, DI www.sarpinos.vn

Scoozi

An Italian restaurant that offers pizza, pasta, salad, special desserts and a wide variety of drinks. Provide dine-in, take away and home delivery services.

6 Thai Van Lung, DI

japanese



Achaya Cafe

CHAYA CAFE Achaya Cafe have two floors providing a nice atmosphere for meeting, relaxation or party. The menu is extensive with drinks and Western, Japanese, Vietnamese food from sandwiches, spaghetti, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts. 90 Le Loi, DI 093 897 2050 11am - 10:30pm

Aka Taiyo

Aka Taiyo serves traditional and exotic Japanese cuisine with an extensive menu featuring more than 200 dishes. Also stocks a surprisingly comprehensive range of Japanese alcoholic beverages. 74B Hai Ba Trung, DI 3824 4295 www.atakataiyo.com

Ajisen Ramen

One of the more authentic Japanese venues in the area with ingredients imported from Japan, this restaurant is best-known for its tasty "white" soups. The restaurant serves at least 250 traditional dishes.

120 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI 3822 0522

Aki Japanese Restaurant

A small Japanese restaurant with a cozy and comfortable atmosphere, Aki serves over 100 authentic Japanese dishes. 15/9 Le Thanh Ton, DI 3827 9083

Baby Spoon

Famous for its extensive omurice menu (fried rice wrapped inside an egg omelette), Baby Spoon offers contemporary Japanese-Western fusion cuisine. Baby Spoon omurice (green bell peppers, bacon, tomato sauce omurice) is the house specialty. 47 Phan Chu Trinh, DI

Blanchy Street Oi's Pick

Once hidden upstairs at the Blanchy's Tash bar, Blanchy Street now has its own location in the courtyard of eateries on Hai Ba Trung, offering authentic Japanese food mixed with fusion cuisine and the occasional additional Southeast Asian dish. Run by an ex Nobu (London) chef with his own signature dishes, it has wide appeal. Food is designed to be shared and is backed by an extensive list of sakes and wines.

74/3 Hai Ba Trung, DI 3823 8793 www.blanchystreet.com

* Reviewed by Oi in April 2013

Cam On Restaurant

Cam On specializes in Japanese health food, with a dedication to helping men and women maintain their beauty and health by providing quality cuisine with natural ingredients. 30 Thai Van Lung, DI 3823 3955 www.cam-on.asia

Dragon Hotpot

Dragon Hotpot blends fine taste with the healthy ingredients of Japanese cuisine. Drinks include Japanese favorites along with fine international wines. 122-124 Ho Tung Mau, DI 3825 8842

Dragon Noodle

A rather small but pretty restaurant with warm tones and a nice series of murals depicting old Saigon, Dragon Noodle focuses on the Japanese staple – ramen noodle soups – although their version is a little less spicy than is traditionally served, increasing perhaps the international appeal of the dish. There are a total of four soup bases to accompany the noodles. 29 Dong Du, DI 3521 0008 www.ramen.vn

Dragon Steak

A striking Japanese restaurant tucked away off Saigon's central street, Dragon steak specialises in thick wagyu cuts and tenderloin that could well have been cut off a beast the size of a dragon. They're so enormous that the restaurant once ran a cheeky competition – guests who finished one within half an hour dined free. 138 Ton That Dam, DI 3821 0288 www.steak.vn

Ebisu

Ebisu serves neither sushi nor sashimi – instead, the menu focuses on a range of wholesome charcoal-grilled meals and

on thick, white Japanese udon noodles – made from imported udon powder from Australia – and presenting an overall rustic cuisine with a variety of good sakes. 35Bis Mac Dinh Chi, DI 3822 6971 ductm@incubation-vn.com ebisu-vn.asia

Fuji Restaurant

The cuisine is exceptional – fresh seafood and vegetables flown in direct from Japan and Dalat. A preferred venue for those staying at the hotel, and worth trying if you're living local. Ground Floor, Nikko Hotel Saigon 235 Nguyen Van Cu, DI 3830 8123

Hanayuki

A Japanese-style restaurant on Ton Duc Thang with a sushi bar on the ground floor and a fine mezzanine level, Hanayuki serves more than 200 exquisite Japanese dishes with more than 30 kinds of sushi and sashimi. Private, traditional Japanese VIP rooms are available on the top level. 21C Ton Duc Thang, DI 3824 2754

Indaba Restaurant

Indaba Cafe & Restaurant offers Japanese, Western and Vietnamese cuisine. It boasts homemade ingredients such as udon noodles, soy sauce for sushi and matcha ice cream. 35 Ly Tu Trong, DI www.facebook.com/indabacafe

Inaho Restaurant

This unique venue specializes in traditional sushi & sashimi as well as hot pot dishes. Couples can retreat to the upstairs area; it's far more private than the downstairs bar. 4 Chu Manh Trinh, DI 3829 0326

Kabuto Tokyo

One of the more exuberant Japanese venues in this city, Kabuto Tokyo on Mac Thi Buoi specialises in both traditional and fusion fresh Japanese seafood cuisine. It's a vibrant venue with its manga murals, carp lanterns, giant samurai warrior, and large aquarium – and in the evening it becomes a respectable upmarket bar. For a quirky beverage there, try a sake served in a bamboo tube. 45 Mac Thi Buoi, DI 3822 2351 kabuto.com.vn

K Cafe

K Cafe Sushi is a large Japanese restaurant; an ideal place to gather for a business lunch or for a social dinner. 74A4 Hai Ba Trung, DI 38245355 www.yakatabune-saigon.com

Kissho

Experienced chefs prepare teppanyaki, sushi, and yakiniku dishes before your eyes. In addition, an extensive wine list is available as well as an array of fine sake to complement the exquisite flavors of premium imported meat and seafood. 14 Nguyen Hue, DI www.kissho.wmctvietnam.com

Kuru Kuru Shushi

A Japanese restaurant that features a rotating conveyor belt for the buffet, offering 50 different selections. It also offers an a la carte menu. 129 Nguyen Du, DI www.kurururu.com.vn

Kokkekoko Pandora

Kokkekoko is a combination of modern style fast food with the essence of ancient Japanese cuisine. The restaurant space is designed with high quality materials and features youthful and modern dynamic subtleties. With prices under VND100,00 Kokkekoko is a must see.

4th Floor Pandora, I/1 Truong Chinh, Tan Phu
3849 6840
www.kokkekoko.com.vn

La Fenetre Soleil

Glass tables with mosaic tiles and wooden floors set off large comfy sofas and high ceilings, and diners can look out over the busy Ly Tu Trong though 11 large French windows. Its sense of personality attracts artistically-inclined expats to return often, and many of these profess it as their favourite hangout in Saigon. Cuisine is Japanese-Vietnamese fusion.

44 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3824 5994

Mus Mus

Customers choose a total of twelve ingredients from the selection on offer, which are then added to a bowl of boiling broth on the tabletop. Flavours are essentially Japanese seafood.

117 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 9185
www.musmus.net

Osaka Ramen

Traditional Japanese noodle restaurant offering traditional Ramen dishes as well as Japanese/Vietnamese fusion cuisine.

67 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI
10am - 10pm

Robata Dining An

The restaurant has a downstairs bar and a second floor with private rooms that have sunken tables, sliding fusuma doors and tabletop barbecues. Popular with the Japanese expats, the menu serves up healthy appetizers, rolls, sashimi and An specialty dishes like deep fried chicken with garlic salt sauce An style (VND100,000).

15C Le Thanh Ton, DI
www.robata-an.com

Sakura Vietnamese-Japanese Restaurant

Cozy, friendly and modern Japanese restaurant near all of the attractions in the city center.

99 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
6291 1036
sakurasaku.vn

Sumo BBQ

Sumo BBQ is a rising star amongst Japanese venues in Saigon, offering smokeless table BBQ and a unique buffet/a la carte concept: get whatever you want from the menu, as much as you like. Free birthday beer specials on arrangement.

300 Le Van Sy, Tan Binh
3991 4757
sumobbq.com.vn
10.30am - 10.30pm

Sushi Bar

There are plenty of dining spaces – large and small rooms, floor-level Japanese dining on tatami mats, private areas, and the eponymous large sushi bar on the ground level.

2 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3823 8042
www.sushibar.vn.com

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place

evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.

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

Sushi World

A four-storey restaurant in a Japanese-style, the first and second floors feature an open sushi bar, while the upper levels contain 15 VIP rooms decorated in a traditional Japanese style with tatami matting.

28 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
3911 0147
www.sushiworld.com.vn

Tokyo Deli

Tokyo Deli's menu consists of a wide range of distinctive and delicious meals, prepared by specialists to create pure Japanese flavor. The menu is always being changed and improved.

240 Le Thanh Ton, DI
5404 2244
tohyodeli.com.vn

Uraetai BBQ Restaurant

Uraetai serves yakiniku grill, a variant of the popular Korean dish bulgogi. The restaurant itself is attractively done, with a nod to feng shui in its selective placement of ponds and rocky pathways outside.

6673 9373

Vicki's Teppanyaki & BBQ

It provides a fusion of Asian cuisines with dishes from Japan, Singapore, and Vietnam. Their menu is interesting and diverse, with many delectable seafood options.

42 Le Anh Xuan, DI
3823 3232
vickis.com.vn

Vietnam Monde

Good for receptions, team meetings, relaxation, family dining, banquet and other special occasions. The recommended dishes include Kobe beef imported from Japan, Tepan Steak, Sashimi and Sushi. Average price per person is between VND100,000 to VND300,000.

7bis Korea Sailing, Ben Nghe Ward, DI
0838220187

Vui Vui

Vui Vui is a Japanese restaurant specializing in barbecue and Japanese-style hot pot. Offers a variety of set lunches including Yakiudon, Kimuchi Pokka, Suhiyaki and Purukogi. The restaurant has two floors with each floor accommodating approximately 100 guests.

125A Tran Quoc Thao, D3
www.vuivui.net.vn

Wainosuke

Wainosuke is a Japanese and Italian style restaurant. It serves food such as pastas, salads and steaks to name a few and wine from traditional Japanese to premium Italian wine.

37 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3821 4016
www.wainosuke.vn.asia

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, DI
3823 3333

Yuki

Yukie is a popular Japanese restaurant located in the backpacker area of District 1. Offering authentic Japanese cuisine at affordable prices.

99 Nguyen Thai Hoc, DI
3824 2754

korean

Dae Jang Gum

All the theatrics of a traditional Korean experience are part of the service at Dae Jang Gum, named after a historic figure, but more pertinently after a wildly popular Korean drama focusing on her life – photos from the series appear throughout the venue. From waitresses in hanboks to vast plates of kimchi, this is the most authentic introduction to the cuisine available outside of District 7.

1st Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza
39 Le Duan, DI
3825 7974
www.daejanggum.vn

Hana Restaurant

Japanese-Korean fusion in the heart of DI. Hana has contemporary decor with a private, open feel. Its broad menu includes both cooked and raw fish in addition to traditional hot pot with fish eggs, rice and vegetables.

8 Cao Ba Quat, DI
3829 5588
9am - 10pm

Mi Han Quoc

This franchise has gained popularity in Ho Chi Minh City for having successfully adapted the spiciness of Korean cuisine to the local Vietnamese palate, serving perfectly balanced noodle dishes.

92 Ham Nghi, DI
3914 1565
www.mihanquocvn.com
8am - 11pm

Mr. BBQ – Korean Chicken & Hof

This unusual Korean import famous for extraordinarily spicy chicken is an odd phenomenon on the HCMC culinary landscape, serving up a version of KFC that's actually painful. Lovers of spicy food rejoice. The restaurant itself is clean and modern in design, and there are another 50 Korean dishes on offer beyond the signature dish, including some tasty bibimbap mixed rice dishes.

20 Ho Huan Nghiep, DI
3823 9000

Seoul House

Seoul House is a well-known two-story Korean restaurant with a simple, cozy atmosphere. Its menu contains Korean favorites like Banchan, hotpots, grilled meat, clay pot mixed rice, and kim chi tofu soup.

33 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3829 4297

steakhouses

Au Lac do Brazil

Serving Saigon for more than 10 years, Au Lac do Brazil is the very first authentic

Brazilian Churrascaria in Vietnam, bringing a new dining concept - an "All you can eat" Brazilian style BBQ where meat is brought to your table on skewers by a passador and served to your heart's content. They have an extensive selection of fine wines as well.

HO CHI MINH CITY
Au Lac do Brazil I
238 Pasteur, D3
(08) 3820 7157
HA NOI
Au Lac do Brazil II
6A Cao Ba Quat, Ba Dinh
(04) 3845 5224
For Banquet & Catering
Call or email
pr@aulacdobrazil.com
090 947 8698
www.aulacdobrazil.com
www.facebook.com/aulacdobrazil

Corso Steakhouse and Bar

Corso Steakhouse and Bar operates under an open kitchen concept, bringing together an exciting menu of Asian and European dishes with a focus on grilling. Guests can choose from a wide variety of wines and spirits.

117 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3829 5368
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn

Dragon Steak

Specializing in generous portions of Wagyu cuts; they're so enormous that the restaurant runs a cheeky competition - finish one within half an hour, and it's free.

138 Ton That Dam, DI
3821 0288
www.steak.vn
11am - late

El Gaucho

Serves great Argentinean steaks, hamburgers and more. A great place to entertain clients or friends from overseas. With outlets in Hanoi and Bangkok too.

5D Nguyen Sieu, DI
38251879
www.elgaucho.asia

Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting.

204 Le Lai, DI
www.ichibansushi.vn

New York Steakhouse

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

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI
3823 7373
www.steakhouse.com.vn

Pho 99 🍴 OI's Pick

Not a traditional steakhouse per se, but Pho 99 is known for its excellent filet mignon steaks made out of Cu Chi beef. Also serves great pho.

139 Nguyen Trai, DI
3925 2791

Samba Brazilian Steakhouse

This is certainly Saigon's most visible and colourful restaurant serving the popular Brazilian buffet style, where enormous skewers of meat are circulated around the tables for diners to enjoy as much of as they can.

10C Thai Van Lung, DI
3822 0079
www.samba.vnnhahang.com

Wild Horse Salon



Cowboy-themed western steakhouse with an impressive exterior on trendy Thai Van Lung, Wild Horse serves high-quality Tex Mex/American cuisine with enormous servings.

8A/IDI Thai Van Lung, DI
3825 1901

thai

Golden Elephant



A cozy and relaxing Thai style restaurant, serving an extensive collection of Thai specialties including noodles, curries, rice, stir-fries, soups, and a good range of seafood.

34 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3822 8554

Jasmine Thai



A quiet, candle-lit affair complete with the ethereal tones of traditional music, guests can enjoy variations on dishes prepared in the Thai culinary tradition.

85 Quoc Huong, D2
35190038

5pm - 9.30pm Tue-Sun

Koh Thai



Stunning Thai-chic decor and unique Siam cuisine make Koh Thai one of Saigon's most authentic and memorable Thai restaurants. Located in the Intercontinental complex, Koh Thai serves Asian inspired cocktails in a trendy lounge environment with chill music.

1st floor, 39 Le Duan, DI
3823 4423

091 233 9138
www.kohthai.com.vn
11am - 10pm Daily

Lac Thai



Lac Thai is a large, three-floor restaurant offering a wide range of Thai cuisine with signature dishes like Pad Thai, Tom Yum Koong, Chicken Satay and many others.

71/2 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3823 7506

Mai Thai



Mai Thai is a Thai restaurant offering an extensive menu with many Thai favorites. This two-storey restaurant features traditional decorations and friendly service.

13 Ton That Thiep, DI
3821 2920
11am - 2pm, 5pm - 10pm

Malee Thai



A cute, central Thai venue decked out in royal purple decor, Malee is an intimate restaurant serving a wide range of consistently tasty dishes, although without the full effect of Thai cuisine's signature burn.

37 Dong Du, DI
3829 3029
11am - 2pm, 5pm - 11pm

Spice



Spice Thai restaurant has been a favorite among the locals in Saigon since 2003. This multicultural eatery offers Thai food & seafood in a décor fusing Oriental & Mediterranean artifacts.

27C Le Quy Don, D3
3930 7873
www.spicevn.com

Thai Express



Thai Express is the world's largest Thai

restaurant chain. Enjoy fantastically authentic Thai cuisine at reasonable prices in a relaxed, contemporary atmosphere.

8A Le Thanh Ton, DI
6299 1338
www.thaiaexpress.com.vn

vietnamese

3T Quan Nuong



With hanging oil lamps and wooden statues lining the stairs, this venue above the Temple Bar has a touch more atmosphere than most of its kind, but the otherwise simple décor with bamboo tables and chairs are fitting enough. The broad barbecue grill menu features classics of its kind.

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, DI
3821 1631

An Khue Quan



Serving a well-selected series of dishes from both northern and southern regions of Vietnam in an area where international diners are likely to be in abundance – and therefore well attuned to the foreign palate.

92B Le Lai, DI
3925 9583

An Vietnamese Bistro



An Restaurant offers exquisite dishes from the North, Central, and South of Vietnam, served by well-trained waiters and waitresses dressed in traditional Southern clothing.

71/5-6 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3825 8275

Banh Xeo 46A



Although known for a wide range of Vietnamese specialties, the local pancake stuffed with herbs and prawns is its tastiest dish.

46A Dinh Cong Trang, DI
3824 1110

Banh Xeo An La Chien



The fare on offer is traditional Vietnamese, specialising in the Banh Xeo filled egg pancake, a favourite with foreigners with its light crispy shell and fragrant herbs and meats inside the pancake pocket.

74 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
3833 0534

www.banhxeoanlaghien.com.vn/en

Barbecue Garden



The venue features all open-air dining and the atmosphere is distinctly festival-like, relaxing, and casual, becoming congenially boisterous in the evenings. The restaurant specializes in Western-Vietnamese fusion dishes such as beef with cheese, 5-spices beef, squid with satay sauce, and shrimp kebabs.

135A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI
3823 3340

www.barbecuegarden.com

Beefsteak Nam Son

This local steak restaurant specializes in Vietnamese-style iron-plate meat dishes rather than the American steaks often popular with expats – but while these two varieties have their differences, the local version of the dish has a fresh, light character and is served with some good, delicate Vietnamese sauces.

188 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3930 3917

www.namsonsteak.com

Binh An Village

Open every day for dining and other banqueting services, Binh An Village serves traditional country cuisine such as in house fried spring rolls, fresh lotus shrimp salad, selective grilled seafood and meats served with sticky pineapple

rice. A jazz band is available for booking for private functions. It also offers special arrangements such as a Saigon boat cruise, DJ, traditional Vietnamese folklore music and more.

1163 Binh Quoi, Binh Thanh
3556 6099
saigon@binhanvillage.com

Bonbon

Offers authentic Vietnamese cuisines as well as a modern global menu. It boasts hand-selected steaks and a world-class wine list. The restaurant is designed to be multi-functional, with the ability to continually change the layout and atmosphere for high-end group events, intimate romance or casual dinners.

Kumho Building, 39 Le Duan, DI
info@bonbonrestaurant.vn
6291 7788

Bo Ne Le Hong



Bo Ne Le Hong is a popular Vietnamese restaurant specializing in beefsteak. It has a rich, diverse menu, and also offer fresh fruit juices.

489/27/39 Huynh Van Banh, Phu Nhuan
3990 5106

Bo Nong

This performance venue features a traditional cultural show with Vietnamese cuisine. Established by Frenchmen Thibault Detraz and Jeremy Gremillet, who aim to bring the French passion for fusing live entertainment with dining.

143 Nguyen Trai, DI
www.bo-nong.com

Bun Sai Gon



This franchise positions itself firmly in the local market with the slogan 'the bun noodles of the Vietnamese people' – indicating a concerted dedication to the authenticity of its noodle soup staples.

73 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6276 2609

www.bunsaigon.com.vn

Cha Ca La Vuong

This venue only serves Cha Ca, a traditional Hanoi dish. Cha Ca is a salad made out of pieces of fish and spring onion stir-fried in a hotpot.

36 Ton That Thiep, DI
3915 3343

Cuc Cach Quan

This Vietnamese venue serves traditional, country-style foods, a mixture of street food dishes made with fine ingredients together with a selection of more contemporary options.

10 Dang Tat, DI
3848 0144

Five Oysters

Serves local cuisine with an emphasis on seafood and beers starting at VND10,000. Open daily from 9am until late.

090 30 12123
www.facebook.com/FiveOysters

Canh



With green suspended lanterns, simple and elegant furnishings, all touched off with bamboo baskets of fruit, flowers, and reed grass, the atmosphere is just as smooth and well-defined as a more modern-styled venue.

58/4 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 5243
www.nemnuongganh.com

Gold Fish



Gold Fish offers a slice of authentic Vietnam with a genuinely rural cuisine.

73 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
www.goldfish.vn

Grillbar - Eatery & Cafe

A new trendy kitchen and cozy restaurant with the concept of taking traditional Vietnamese charcoal grilled street food and serving it in a New York style cafe.

122 Le Thanh Ton, DI
38227 901
www.grillbar.com.vn

Highway 4



The menu reflects the ambiance of the north and wider Vietnam, although dishes are carefully selected to meet a more universal palate.

101 Vo Van Tan, D3
3602 2069
www.highway4.com

Hoa Tuc



Set in what used to be Saigon's opium refinery, Hoa Tuc serves up contemporary Vietnamese cuisine in a Parisian, art-deco atmosphere.

74 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3825 1676
www.hoatuc.com

Hoang Yen

A venue for those who are looking for high-quality Vietnamese cuisine. Try some of the country's delicacies in a modern yet inviting atmosphere. The eatery's various clay pots are flavorful; some feature mam, a delicious fermented fish paste. While the restaurant's cuisine is light and healthy overall, those with a penchant for green veggies should definitely order one of Hoang Yen's assortment of edible 'flowers' – especially the sautéed hoa thien ly. It is recommended to order a few dishes and share them all.

7-9 Ngo Duc Ke, DI
148 Hai Ba Trung, DI
Parkson Hung Vuong, Third Floor, Hung Vuong Plaza, An Duong Vuong, D5
CRI- 12, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.hoangyencuisine.com

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, DI
3823 8920
www.hum-vegetarian.vn

Khoai Restaurant

Specializes in dishes from Nha Trang.

3A Le Quy Don, D3
www.rhoairestaurant.com

Lang Viet 🍷 Oi's Pick

Lang Viet combines water puppet theater with Vietnamese northern cuisine. There are two performances in the evening (5pm and 6:16pm) and last for 45 minutes, with an option of a la carte dining, set menu or buffet afterwards. During the day, the restaurant serves breakfast and lunch, starting at 10am to 2pm. Their sister restaurant, Pho Xua, was once visited by Former President Bill Clinton in 2000.

36 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 9266
www.langvietxua.com

Lemongrass



The vibe aims at a harmony between modern styling and the Vietnamese traditional arts, and the dining room with its tile floors and wooded wainscoting effects a comforting natural environment.

4 Nguyen Thiep, DI

Luong Son



Exotic beer garden style eatery famous for its barbecue beef. Luong Son also serves

fear factor items such as scorpions, grubs, ostrich meat and crickets.

31 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3825 1330
www.facebook.com/LuongSonQuan

Nam Phan

Nam Phan is a 200 seat restaurant that is accents Vietnamese cuisine with live classical music.

34 Vo Van Tan, D3

Nam Phat Restaurant

A Vietnamese restaurant that specializes in hosting social events such as weddings and business conferences. Traditional Vietnamese cuisine is the specialty with prices ranging from VND100,000 - VND300,000. The setting is of an elegant banquet hall.

21 Nguyen Trung Ngan, DI
3910 6488
nhahangnamphat@gmail.com

Marina Saigon

Marina Saigon is one of the leading seafood restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City. This restaurant provides a luxurious environment with French/Vietnamese fusion cuisine.

172 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3930 2379

Maxim's Nam An

Large and lavishly decorated, Maxim's Nam An restaurant serves Vietnamese cuisine in style. The carved wooden booths, completed with silk curtains, are a romantic hideaway for couples or small groups.

13-15-17 Dong Khoi, DI

Mitau

Mitau creates a gathering place for those who love Hue cuisine. The interior includes memorabilia, statues, bric and brac and golf trophies.

52 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3823 0767
www.mitauhue.com

Nghi Xuan

Decorated as a high-class traditional Vietnamese mansion, Nghi Xuan is perfectly fitting for a venue serving the finest of Vietnam's classical cuisine – the imperial dishes of Hue. Service is courteous, fast, and quintessentially elegant.

5/9 Nguyen Sieu, DI
3823 0699
nghixuanrestaurant.com

Nha Hang Ngon

Famous restaurant serving easy Vietnamese cuisine to foreigners and tourists with more than 400 traditional dishes.

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

Papaya Restaurant

A petite, clean, and brightly-coloured Vietnamese restaurant with simple décor serving a light, healthy, northern-style cuisine. There's no fuss in the layout here – green walls with black & white artworks, brown wooden furnishings, and lanterns above every table make for a very pleasant atmosphere – and it's casual without being messy, and refined without any trace of pretentiousness.

68 Pham Viet Chanh, Binh Thanh
6258 1508
papaya@chi-nghia.com
www.chi-nghia.com

Pho 2000

Pho 2000's Ben Thanh Market branch

was famously visited by former US President Bill Clinton in 2000. The chain serves up variations on pho as well as noodle and rice dishes.

4 Phan Chu Trinh, DI
3822 2788
6am - 10pm

Pho 24

PHO24 is a popular Vietnamese noodle restaurant chain with 70 outlets across Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia.

71-73 Dong Khoi, DI
3825 7505

Propaganda Bistro

Offers Vietnamese cuisine such as spring rolls and Vietnamese street food with a Western twist. Serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The restaurant features hand-painted wall murals.

21 Han Thuyen, DI
3822 9048
www.facebook.com/Propaganda-Saigon

Quan Bui Authentic Vietnamese Cuisine

Leafy green roof garden, upmarket restaurant with reasonable prices and a wide menu of choices. Open style kitchen advertises its cleanliness. Designer interior with spot lighted pictures and beautiful cushions give an oriental luxurious feeling – augmented by dishes served on earthenware crockery.

17a Ngo Van Nam, DI
3829 1515
(deliveries: 3602 2241 or 091 400 8835)

Quan An Ngon

Quan An Ngon appeals easily to tourists and local people alike in its unique concept: presenting the diversity of Vietnamese cuisine from different regions in a village market style. The restaurant is set in a large new building, which from its external yellow appearance is reminiscent of an old European villa; but inside its space is designed as an ancient Hue ruong house.

138 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI
3827 9666
www.quanngon138.com

Royal Revolving Restaurant

The Royal Revolving Restaurant is a unique restaurant experience. Experience stunning views of the city while you spin around in the sky. The restaurant offers more than 50 Hong Kong inspired dishes and a bar that serves coffee and cocktails.

9th Floor, 12D Cach Mang Thang Tam, DI
3823 2232

Saigon Vegan

Saigon Vegan is located in a casual and inviting space with high ceilings, dark wood tables, and lots of natural light. Guests can choose from over 100 vegan dishes, all of which are either soy or vegetable based.

378/3 Vo Van Tan, D3
3834 4473

SH Garden restaurant

Established in the 1930s, the Terrace restaurant is located at the corner of two of the oldest boulevards of Saigon, Nguyen Hue and Le Loi, where romantic memories of Saigon float around. This restaurant offers a variety of delicious traditional Vietnamese dishes.

4th floor, 98 Nguyen Hue, DI
6680 0188
shgarden.com.vn

Song Ngu

There are eight different rooms capable of seating a total of 350-400 guests, each warmly-lit with dark wooden furnishings.

On a small stage, a traditional chamber orchestra with ladies wearing classical Ao dai costumes perform Vietnamese music on genuine old instruments.

70 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
3832 5017

Temple Club

Usually regarded as one of central Saigon's most authentically Vietnamese venues, this historic and good-looking features classic Indochinese decor, broadly interpreted as a blend of the old French colonial style with pan-Asian graces that appeal more to Asian exoticism than reflect actual Vietnamese styles. With antique furnishings and ceiling fans, the atmosphere is certainly pretty.

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

Thanh Nien Restaurant

With its attractive home-style layout, pretty garden for outdoor dining, and warm, yellow-toned interior for the buffet, it's a charming venue for tourists and a familiar favourite for long-timers. It's intentionally decorated like a private home, walls decorated with floral artworks, and the garden surrounded by bamboo.

11 Nguyen Van Chiem, DI
3822 5909
www.vnnavi.com/restaurants/thanhvien

Thang Bom Quan

Serves hot pot and special style BBQ.

49 Pho Duc Chinh, DI

Tib Restaurant

This fine Vietnamese Hue-style restaurant looks almost like a temple, and it's considered one of the city's premier settings serving imperial cuisine.

187 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3829 7242
www.tibrestaurant.com.vn

Tin Nghia

A charming little venue serving vegetarian cuisine. Its quaint appearance hides the fact that it was the first international vegetarian restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City and an important center of the city's vegetarian culture.

9 Tran Hung Dao, DI
3821 2538

Vietnam House

Vietnam House is a high quality restaurant specializing in both local Vietnamese and international cuisine. This restaurant is set in a restored French colonial house offering stunning views of the street.

93-95 Dong Khoi, DI
3829 1623
www.vietnamhousesaigon.com

(other) asian

Crawfish King

Crawfish King serves special menus with crawfish, lobster, mantis shrimp, American-style chicken wings, oysters, fruit beer, sea urchin and more. Offers free delivery for customers in DI and D3.

63 Truong Dinh, DI
6272 7888
www.facebook.com/crawfishking63
7am - 12am

Lion City

This is a Singaporean franchise to watch with interest – since its humble beginnings in 2006 with the rather more unpleasant name Singapore Frog Porridge, it has risen in strength

to become the most prominent representative of the cuisine in the city, and its growth has continued to be remarkable.

45 Le Anh Xuan, DI
3823 8371
www.lioncityrestaurant.com

Long Monaco

Long Monaco operates throughout the city under various brand names – this outlet is a standalone restaurant in the busy Etown office complex in Tan Binh district. You'll probably only visit if you're working nearby or visiting on official business, but you'll find the restaurant serves some great Asian business lunches.

Ground Floor, Etown I
364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh
www.longmonaco.com.vn

western/international



Parkview

Located within New World Saigon Hotel, Parkview is a sophisticated restaurant with a view of the adjacent 23 September Park. Their buffets feature both Asian and international favorites along with local and imported fish, oysters, prawns, shrimps and snails. Every Sunday, the brunch buffet offers a fine fare including rotisserie and steak specialties, with an ice bar serving up sushi and sashimi.

New World Saigon Hotel
76 Le Lai Street, DI
3822 8888
saigon@newworldhotels.com
www.saigon.newworldhotels.com

27 Grill

27 Grill is an open kitchen run by Danish chefs Casper Gustafsen and Camilla Bailey and is known for its steaks. It also offers a spectacular view of the city. Opens from 5:30pm - 11pm.

Rooftop, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, DI
www.chillisaigon.com

Al Fresco's

Offering a mix of Tex-Mex, Italian, and Australian food along with cold local & imported beers and a wine list featuring Australia's finest whites along with affordable South American reds.

16 Nguyen Thi Nghia, DI
3926 0036
www.alfrescosgroup.com
8:30am - 11pm

Au Parc

It's only fitting that this Mediterranean-styled restored villa with its original tiles, old window frames, plush cushions, and opium-themed art collection sits in one of the most gorgeous streets of central Saigon. Au Parc is an unforgettable venue with a décor that manages to simultaneously capture the grace of the old Colonial architecture and the mood of west-Asian exoticism that transfixed Europe in the Romantic period.

23 Han Thuyen, DI
3829 2772

Bahija

Algerian restaurant serving north African

delights such as couscous, tajines and desserts. Unique Mechoui set dinner is a popular choice and perfect for groups (available with prior notice).
87-89-91 Ho Tung Mau, D1
093 787 2010 (French, Arabic, English, Finnish)

Ben Style 🍷 OI's Pick

Every sandwich comes wrapped with a label that displays its calories, protein, fat and carbohydrates content. A 544-calorie Cheesy tofu meatballs sandwich costs VND80,000 while a 281-calorie Chicken salad sets you back VND50,000. The chicken jumbo sandwich comes with a massive 638 calories, 59 grams of protein and 62 grams of carbohydrates, but only 16 grams of fat. Ben also offers meal plans for those who want to get fit and bulk up.

302 Co Bac, D1
090 691 2730

Beirut

Offers Lebanese and Mediterranean food with belly dancers every night from 8:30pm to 10pm and Latino dancers from 10pm to midnight.

74/13D Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.beirut.com.vn

Black Cat Restaurant

Originally envisioned as a fast food Vietnamese sandwich place, Black Cat Saigon now serves international food with a focus on burgers, most famously its "Big Cheese" featuring 500g of beef.

13 Phan Van Dat, D1
3829 2955
www.blackcatsaigon.com

Burger Oi

Burger Oi offers fast delivery at affordable prices. Try their burgers, filet of fish, BBQ pulled pork, fresh cut curly fries and desserts. See their full menu online at www.burgeroi.com
Call 083 826 5426 or
SMS your order to 093 836 3030

Chuck's

Chuck's offers American comfort food like pancakes, omelets, burritos, fries, tacos, burgers and hotdogs.
27 Tran Nhat Duat, D1

Crab Pot

Crab Pot is a beer and seafood restaurant serving breakfasts, lunches and dinners of American, French, Seafood and Vietnamese cuisines, with delivery and catering services also.
65 Pham Ngoc Thach 6, D3

Gartenstadt

Gartenstadt serves German cuisine including sausage, sauerbraten, and pork knuckle. Known amongst locals and expats for its long teakwood bar, Gartenstadt is home to imported Schneider Weisse and Krombacher beer, as well as a large collection of choice schnapps. Private dining options are available on the second floor, including balcony seating overlooking scenic Dong Khoi Street.
34 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 3623

Hog's Breath Café

An Australian family diner and bar concept. Renowned for quality steaks, seafood and other western fare served in an informal environment. Smoke-free indoors.
Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
www.hogsbreathcafe.com.vn

Jaspas Wine & Grill 🍷 OI's Pick

Jaspas Wine and Grill provides an extensive wine list along with many "reinvented" Jaspas dishes, new creations, and mouthwatering steaks. Japas also offers a wide array of delectable dessert options.
74/7 Hai Ba Trung, D1

3827 0931
alfrescogroup.com

Khoi Thom

Khoi Thom - "fragrant smoke" in English - is a unique venue, set in a bright, colourful al fresco decor inspired by renowned architect Ricardo Legoretta. A long way from Mexico, Chef Alejandro Torres's menu blends "Cocina Potosina" and timeless Mexican classics.
29 Ngo Thi Nhiem, D3
www.rhoithom.com

La Fenetre Soleil

La Fenetre Soleil, literally means 'window to the sun', showcases a fusion of Old World fittings such as exposed bricks, antique furniture and chandeliers with New World elements such as fur cushions and mosaic tiled and glass tables. Serves a range of cocktails, imported beer, coffee and smoothies together with a Japanese-Vietnamese fusion menu.
4 Ly Tu Trong, D1

La Habana

Offering authentic Spanish cuisine and a wide choice of tapas, as well as Cuban cocktails, La Habana is a den of Cuban-Spanish inspired architecture located on inner-city Cao Ba Quat.
6 Cao Ba Quat, D1
3829 5180
www.lahabana-saigon.com

Ly Club

Often used as a venue for gatherings, networking meetings, and events where an air of wealth and sophistication is useful, Ly Club is a sure bet for making an impression on a date or business lunch. Built into a traditional French villa with wide elliptical arches, the atmosphere of naked opulence persists throughout the property.
143 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3930 5588
www.lyclub.vn

Margherita

For some, Margherita doubles as an unofficial expat rendezvous, partly a result of its agreeable prices and sumptuous Western-style pizzas and foods.
175/1 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
3837 0760

Market 39

Market 39 showcases seven interactive live show kitchens, featuring a la carte all-day dining and an extensive buffet selection served daily during breakfast, lunch and dinner
Ground floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duon
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

Mogambo Bar & Grill

Mogambo is a dark, African-styled restaurant with some of the finest US & Tex-Mex and exceptional burgers.
50 Pasteur, D1
3825 1311

Pacharan - Tapas & Bodega

The city's best-known Spanish restaurant with a sports bar on the ground floor, two floors of dining space, and an open rooftop deck for cocktails and live music. Serving tapas, paella, and an extensive Iberian wine list.
97 Hai Ba Trung, D1
090 724 2757
andres@pacharan.com.vn
10am - late

Pasha

Serving Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine, the kitchen is headed by Chef

Ismet with over 30 years of experience in similar restaurants.

25 Dong Du, D1
6291 3677
www.pasha.com.vn

Reflections

Reflections Restaurant is a fine dining restaurant with a menu that draws inspiration from every corner of the globe. It holds events showcasing Michelin-star Chefs, wine pairing dinners and other culinary luminaries.
Level 3, Caravelle Hotel, 19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
0838234999

Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots. Located 50 meters from Ciao Bella, a popular Italian restaurant on Dung Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.
51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
382 48358

Shri

Shri offers unparalleled panoramic views of the city. Menu offers a broad range of dishes to suit most tastes with modern European styled starters, mains and desserts as well as a wide selection of grills and salads. Wine list is consists currently of over 270 bins with selections from both the Old and New World, with France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Austria as well as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, USA, Argentina and Chile all represented.
Level 23, Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
www.shri.vn

Skewers

An open-air kitchen at the front of the restaurant and a small cigar lounge upstairs set off the atmosphere and mark this venue as one with a unique presence in Saigon. The purely Mediterranean cuisine is appropriately authentic.
9A Thai Van Lung, D1
38224798
www.skewers-restaurant.com

Subway

Subway is now in Vietnam, offering its internationally-renowned range of subs sandwiches and cookies. World travelers can expect the same high quality of ingredients regardless of what nation they are visiting.
121 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3914 4118

The Elbow Room

The Elbow Room on Pasteur is an American-style bistro with a long bar, exposed brickwork, white walls, and whirring ceiling fans – making for a casual, contemporary space with an international vibe. More of a diner than a restaurant, Elbow shoots at a cool, relaxed atmosphere, pleasantly decorating its warmly-lit walls with evocative black & white photos and subtle lighting.
52 Pasteur, D1
www.elbowroom.com.vn

The Hungry Pig

A sandwich bar that takes bacon very seriously, The Hungry Pig is a place where you can find bacon, wrapped in fresh-baked bagels and baguettes.
144 Cong Quynh, D1

Warda

Warda is a Middle-Eastern style bar and restaurant headed by a renowned Syrian chef. Guests can enjoy authentic middle-eastern cuisine indoors and outdoors

while enjoying an almond cigar or shisha.
17/7 Mac Thi Bui, D1

Xu Restaurant Lounge

The venue is well-known for its pork wantons, bun cha, seared beef crostinis, bo luc lac diced beef and 'Xu-style' chicken rice. Xu is an elegant venue that works as a restaurant or a high-class bar for the upper echelons.
71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.xusaigon.com

White Forest

Set in a modern décor, the restaurant serves authentic Italian and French cuisine accompanied by a good selection of European wines and cocktails. Happy Hour cocktails from 2pm – 7:30pm where it's buy one get one free. Order take-away online at vietnammm.com, foodpanda.vn, and eat.vn
14 Bis Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1
0122 428 5237
www.whiteforest.com.vn

ZanZBar

ZanZBar boasts an eclectic range of international cuisine, great wines, handcrafted espresso coffees, happy hour specials and more. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week from 7am until late.
19-21 Dong Khoi, D1

Zest Bistro & Cafe

A casual restaurant featuring an American, French and fusion menu. Located across from the waterfront, just minutes away from the Bach Dang pier, Zest offers diners one of the nicest views in the city.
5 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 5599

Zoom Cafe 🍷 OI's Pick

Zoom cafe serves Tex-Mex and Vietnamese cuisine as well as running a Vespa tour service from within the café.
169A Bui Vien, D1
3920 3897
7am - 2am daily

>> The List District 2

BAKERIES

Sweet and Sour

Offers custom made cakes, pies, tarts, brownies and cupcakes. It welcomes visitors to an open kitchen where they can watch and be a part of what makes its sweets special. Provides catering for special occasions.
AVA Residences, 40/4 Nguyen Van, D2
3519 3167

Voelker

French bakery selling fresh breads, pastries and chocolate
39 Thao Dien, D2
6296 0066
voelker-vietnam.com

BARS

Mcsorley's

Recently opened Irish pub with a swimming pool and outdoor patio. Serves pub grub with events and theme nights happening regularly.
4 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4659
www.mcsorleys.vn

Papagayo Saigon

A resort-style design and French

Mediterranean food are the make-up of this newly opened hangout.
18 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2

Buddha Bar

One of the long standing bars in the area, it has a pool table, darts, big screen tvs along with cheap beers and bar food.
7 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2080

CAFES

Agnes Cafe - Dalat Coffee & Flower Shop

At Agnes Cafe they offer fresh coffee, smoothies and juices along with a delicious breakfast and lunch menu. This quaint and cozy cafe is a perfect place to meet up with friends or just relax to get away from the bustling traffic outside. They offer free delivery.
11A-B Thao Dien, D2

Shalom Coffee

Shalom Coffee is available for all your coffee and chocolate needs, warm snacks, cold refreshments, breakfasts and lunches.
53 Vo Trung Toan, D2
www.coffeeshalom.com

RESTAURANTS

FRENCH



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 or enjoy a game of pool.
13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com

Gastro'home

New delicatessen shop offering western-fusion French food by French chef Stephane Courtin. Visit the shop or try their catering service.
100 Xuan Thuy, D2. 6281 9830

La Villa 🍷 Oi's Pick

This Colonial-style villa set in a quietly gentrified district 2 street is a cache of luxury with its beautiful poolside garden and cosy, scenic white-toned dining room area. Dine outside or in, on an off-the-cuff menu prepared by the French chef, based on the best market ingredients available on the day.
14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn
***Reviewed in Oi March 2013**

Trois Gourmands

Opened in 2004 and regarded as one of the finest French restaurants in town. Owner Gils, a French native, makes his own cheeses as well.
18 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
3744 4585

INDIAN

Ashoka

Ashoka is one of the city's most popular and enduring Indian restaurants with a reputation for good food with a wide

range of North Indian culinary dishes at a reasonable price. Large space for private parties, outdoor catering and free home delivery also available. Special set lunch veg/non-veg from VND90,000 upwards. Promotion (free trip to Cambodia) and discount available for people booking in groups.
33 Tong Huu Dinh (Street 53), D2
3744 4177
www.ashokavietnam.com

ITALIAN

Pendolasco – Thao Dien

Expect excellent classic Italian cuisine – wood-fired pizza, spaghetti, and tiramisu – cooked with a focus on fresh flavours and featuring the finest imported ingredients from Italy.
36 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
62532888
www.pendolasco.vn

Sarpino's Pizzeria

Sarpino's Pizzeria is a famous pizza brand from Canada with three branches around Ho Chi Minh City that specializes in pizza, pasta and rice.
43 Thao Dien, D2. 3744 2132

JAPANESE

Tama River-Japanese Restaurant

Bottles of sake fill shelves along the wall behind the sushi bar, and unique Japanese paintings add a nice visual touch. Since opening four months ago, the restaurant has attracted a diverse clientele, from locals to expats.
14E1 Thao Dien, D2
3744 6782

Chisana Hashi

Serves authentic Japanese cuisine including sashimi, sushi, tempura, sukiyaki and shabu shabu
River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308

THAI

Baan Thai

Baan Thai serves authentic Thai cuisine using a considerable variety of tastes and spices prepared by Thai chefs. Generally speaking, the cuisine leans more towards being authentic in taste than serving the more internationalised versions of Thai cuisine available elsewhere.
55 Thao Dien, D2; 3744 5453
www.baanthai-anphu.com

Jasmine Thai

Expect here variations on dishes you'll find throughout the Thai culinary tradition with features more common to those restaurants serving in Western nations.
85 Quoc Huong, D2
3519 0038

VIETNAMESE

Baniam Tree

A fine dining Vietnamese restaurant. Offers a set lunch, set dinner and international breakfast
River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

Frangipani Hoa Su

Frangipani Hoa Su offers authentic Vietnamese cuisine with a variety of dishes from different parts of Vietnam ranging from pho, bun bo Hue to mi quang. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. It also has an open space and a VIP air-conditioned room together which can hold a maximum capacity of 500 people, making it an ideal venue for different types of events and functions.
26 Le Van Mien, D2
frangipani.restobar@gmail.com

WESTERN/ INTERNATIONAL

Boathouse 🍷 Oi's Pick

With a great view of the Saigon River, this restobar serves imported steak, healthy salads and much more in an alfresco environment.
40 Lily Road, An Phu Superior Compound, D2; 3744 6790
www.boathouse.com.vn

Blu Bar and Grill

Blu Bar provides a wide range of Asian and Mediterranean specialties for breakfast, lunch, and dinner along with many unique beverage options.
53 Vo Trung Toan, D2
3744 4111
7am - 11pm

Blue Crab 🍷 Oi's Pick

Blue Crab offers delicious seafood - prawns, scallops and lobster, crab, oysters, scallops and many more for rock-bottom prices. All of the seafood is sourced from the same supplier as a number of high-end hotels and restaurants in the city, ensuring the food is fresh and high quality. For meat-lovers there's also a wide range of dishes that include pork ribs and chicken wings. They offer weekly specials as well.
49 Quoc Huong, D2
3744 2008
www.bluecrabsaigon.com

Mekong Merchant

Set in a colonial house within an open-air courtyard surrounding, this restaurant serves delicious pizza, sandwiches, smoothies with an extensive wine list.
23 Thao Dien, D2; 3744 4713

Snap Cafe

By day, Snap Cafe is a community-centered, family-friendly cafe and restaurant. By night, guests can enjoy live music, sports on the big screen, quiz nights, pool, foosball, and more. Serves international cafe fare, great food, icy-cold draught beer and wine by the carafe. The space is a large open-plan room with an attached garden and play area for kids. Holds regular movie screenings.
32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
35194532
www.snap.com.vn

The Deck

Located on the banks of the Saigon River, this restaurant offers great international and Vietnamese fare.
38 Nguyen U Di, D2
www.thedecksaigon.com

Vino

They offer professional advice on selecting and tasting wines. The outdoor terrace area is the perfect spot to sample a new vintage and brunches on the weekends.
NO.1, Street 2nd, D2
www.vinovietnam.com

>>The List District 7

BAKERIES

Dunkin' Donuts

This American doughnut and coffee franchise offers munchkins, croissants, donut sandwich and toasted sandwiches - along with the popular sugar raised, glazed chocolate mochi, glazed, chocolate coconut, cinnamon,

Boston kreme, Bavarian Kreme, strawberry-filled or chocolate frosted donuts.
59 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7

Savouré Bakery

Offering gourmet cakes and pastries with all the fine characteristics of the European gourmet tradition. Customers can choose from a wide array of baked goods including cakes, desserts, breads, cookies, wedding cakes, and moon cakes during the season.
Grand View, SD 4-1, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 2469
www.savourebakery.com

BARS

Peaches

A spacious, attractive restobar with comfortable, lounge-style seating and a bar area, this watering hole mixes three beers on tap and a large screen for live sports with a pan-Asian curry menu.
557-1 Sky Garden 2, D7

Ruby Soho

A popular district 7 spot with excellent and cheap range of cocktails, good food and great music! Listen to the likes of Jimi Hendrix, The Ramones or Beck while downing an ice cold one.
552-1 Sky Garden 2, D7

Sala Beer

Enjoy Asian and European dishes at Sala Beer and choose and enjoy more than 50 famous beer brands from around the world.
Ground floor White House Hotel
R2-25 Bui Bang Doan, Hung Phuoc 1, D7

The Tavern

The Tavern is a Western pub & restaurant where patrons can play darts & pool, watch football or enjoy reasonably priced food and drinks.
R2-24 Hung Gia 3, Bui Bang Doan, D7

CAFES

Baskin Robbins

With more than 7000 branches in more than 50 countries, Baskin Robbins is the largest ice-cream chain in the world with flavors such as Baseball Nut and Lunar Cheesecake.
105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.baskinrobbins.vn

Bud's

Bringing the taste of American ice cream to Vietnam, Bud's Ice Cream has nine stores in Ho Chi Minh City. Apart from a variety of delicious ice cream flavors, Bud's also offers a wide range of Western and Vietnamese food.
SD - 04 Panorama Residential Complex, D7
www.budsicecream.com.vn

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf serves some of the best coffee and tea from around the world. It also has a full line of baked goods made from high quality ingredients, most of which are from their own proprietary recipes.
Ground Floor, Crescent Mall, Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.coffeebean.com.vn

FB Deli Coffee

FB Deli Coffee features a unique black and white design and signature coffee beans imported from Italy. Guests can also enjoy many varieties of homemade cakes, along with Tiramisu, muffins, and sandwiches. All cakes 50% off from 7 to 10pm.
SE-1 My Khanh 2 Apartments, D7

The Fountain Coffee Ice Cream

Known for its Swiss ice cream with all the fixings, Fountain Coffee also serves Western dishes in a spacious lounge area.

SB4-1 My Duc Residential Complex, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7

MOF Japanese Sweets & Coffee Crescent

Sourcing the majority of their dessert ingredients from Hokkaido, Japan, MOF serves up premium desserts and a Japanese restaurant menu.

101 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.mof.com.vn/en

NYDC

Established in 1995 in Singapore, NYDC, The New York Dessert Café, aims to bring a piece of New York to Southeast Asia with their popular mudpies and a whole range of Western comfort foods.

107 Ton Dat Tien, D7

S'cottage Restaurant - Café

Inspired by the mysterious wooden house in the Hansel and Gretel story, S'cottage serves up home-style meals in a spacious, fairy-tale inspired space.

SB-02 My Duc Residential Complex, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5411 1186

CHINESE

Huong Vien Hunanese Restaurant

Serving China's little-known spiciest cuisine, the dishes of China's reddest province and the preferred taste of Chairman Mao, Huong Vien is well-decorated although a bit on the pricey side, with dishes averaging VND180,000.

559-S61, Sky Garden 2 Apartments, D7

Ming Dynasty

Ming Dynasty serves authentic Chinese food in a setting reminiscent of an old Chinese palace. Specialties include dim sum, shark fin and abalone and dishes from Quang Dong.

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7

INDIAN

Ashoka

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

S9-1 Block R13, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 1989

Spice India

Spice India offers a wide range of dishes that cater to any palette. Enjoy your curry with a side of Bollywood.

S6-1 Bui Bang Doan, Hung Vuong 3, D7
093 841 6551
www.namaste-india.com.vn

ITALIAN

La Cucina

La Cucina has opened on Crescent Promenade in Phu My Hung, with an open-plan kitchen that can accommodate 180 diners. Enjoy top-end dining featuring the best of Italian cuisine and a wide selection of imported seafood, prepared from the freshest ingredients, in a relaxed, rustic atmosphere.

Reviewed in Oi April 2013
Block 07-08 CRI-07, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 7932

Sarpino's

Sarpino's Pizzeria serves authentic Italian pizzas as well as other Italian dishes such as oven-baked pasta, baked rice, wraps and salad, all at reasonable prices.

351 12-1 Grandview, Nguyen Cao Nam, D7
www.sarpinos.vn

Salt & Pepper Italian Restaurant

Located in the modern confines of The Crescent, this contemporary-styled

Italian restaurant and pizzeria has an open kitchen and an outdoor terrace area. Serving up a range of pan-Italian cuisine, the menu includes a selection of salads, pastas, main courses, pizzas and desserts, all at affordable prices.

103 Ton Dat Tien, D7 | 5412 4848
www.saltpepper.com.vn

JAPANESE

Osaka Ramen

This sleek, open-kitchen contemporary eatery serves up Japanese noodles starting from VND78,000. There are also set menus, individual dishes and a range of smaller, appetizing sides.

SDO4, LO H29-2, My Phat Residential Complex, D7

THAI

Nathalie's Phu My Hung

Nathalie's Phu My Hung is situated in an ideal location on a central corner in the district 7 high-profile metropolitan area. Serving delicious Thai cuisine in charming and romantic surroundings, the restaurant has two floors with a unified, simple decor and warm colourful tones throughout.

S9 Hung Vuong 3 Apartments, D7
5410 0822
www.nathaliesrestaurant.com

Thai Express- Crescent Plaza

Thai Express's interpretation of Thai food exhibits the best of the cuisine but with the edges softened for a global palate unused to the extremes of Thai style cooking. Averaging from 40,000 VND to 200,000 VND per dish, its price can't be beat for the same quality and deliciousness.

105 Ton Dat Tien, D7

VIETNAMESE

Co Ba Vung Tau

Co Ba Vung Tau is a chain of traditional Vietnamese restaurants serving up their famous banh khot amongst an extensive menu of affordable Vietnamese food.

R1-72 Hung Gia 1, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 2027

ASIAN

Cham Charm

Cham is more like a museum than a dining venue, filled with the artefacts and sculpture of the Champa people and with gorgeous artworks and colourful hangings on the walls. The upstairs area is a wide-open terrace with plenty of tables for a more relaxing atmosphere. The cuisine is pan-Asian.

2 Phan Van Chuong, D7

WESTERN/INTERNATIONAL

Berru

Berru is a family-run Turkish restaurant offering a variety of Turkish specialties on the menu including kebabs, koftas, mezzes and soups. This is one of the few halal restaurants that imports all of their halal meat.

SC 3-1 Khu Pho My Khang, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7

Boomarang Bistro Saigon

Located in The Crescent by the Crescent lake, the spacious Boomarang Bistro Saigon serves Australian and other Western food in the most pedestrian friendly part of town.

107 Ton Dat Tien, D7
3841 3883
www.boomarang.com.vn

Cham Charm

Famous for their extensive international nightly buffet featuring 8 types of oysters, American Angus beef and Australian filets, Cham Charm is

devoted to Cham arts, culture and cuisine and is tastefully decorated with Cham artifacts and sculptural works.

02 Phan Van Chuong, Phu My Hung New Urban, D7

EL CAMINO

A small bar & restaurant situated in the heart of Phu My Hung. Relaxing outdoor saloon featuring inexpensive Spanish tapas and small plates from gourmet ingredients. Affordable selection of Spanish & French wines.

137 SB-02 Khu My Phat, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 4641, 3pm - midnight
www.facebook.com/elcaminovietnam

El Gaucho

El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse is an international chain of restaurants serving authentic Argentinian cuisine in a space reflecting modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambience and genuine atmosphere.

Unit CRI-12, The Crescent, D7
3825 1879
www.elgaucho.com.vn

Le Taj

Le Taj offers French cuisine and features a luxury atmosphere of black and white design. Besides a wide variety of menu choices, Le Taj brings you to the ultimate luxury appetite garnished with 24k gold leaf. Le Taj also impresses its guests with a large wine cellar featuring 150 types of international wine that adds to the dining and entertainment variety.

06 Phan Van Chuong, D7
090 535 0211

Salt & Pepper

Salt & Pepper Restaurant mainly serves Italian dishes.

103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.saltpepper.com.vn

Scott & Binh's Restaurant 🍷 Oi's Pick

This unassuming little bistro is making big waves with visitors to the city and resident expats alike. With a menu replete with tasty sandwiches, burgers, pasta, and various other international dishes, this is an ideal guilty hideaway from Vietnamese cuisine for just one meal at least.

15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7

supermarkets

100%

100% Alimentation Generale.De.Qualite is the latest high-end grocery store to grace the streets of An phu. With a rustic charm 100% provides customers with 100% safe, natural and local products all sourced and manufactured in Vietnam. The shop only offers products that reach international food safety requirements and runs food events at the store. All products are available to order online at www.100percent.vn.com.

26b Thao dien, D2

Annam Gourmet

An upscale deli and grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. All locations, in District 1, 2 and 7, have a coffee lounge that serves breakfast, lunch, drinks and early dinner.

41A Thao Dien street. D2. 3744 2630
SB2-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1

An Phu Supermarket

Large supermarket stocking a wide range well-known international brands of dry goods along with fresh groceries, frozen meat and fish, fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, wine, toiletries and more

43 Thao Dien, D2

Classic Fine Foods

Supplier of international brand foodstuff like Illy, Valrhona, Bonne Maman along with fresh vegetables, dairy, and meat.

No. 17, Street 12, D2
www.classicfinefoods.com



Le Cochon D'or

LeCochon D'or shop sells European and International meat that include ham, sausages, pate, terrine, and smoked specialties. A taste of home, because you and your taste buds deserve it! Customizes service available including door-to-door delivery.

64 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 3856
8am - 7pm
www.ngp.com.vn

Metro

Wholesale suppliers of foodstuff, office supplies, furniture, clothes and more. Entry is reserved for business owners only but foreigners can obtain a one-day pass by showing their passports.

Residential An Phu, An Khanh Ward 2

Veggy's

A specialized grocery store carrying imported products, Veggy's offers a wide range of international food imported from abroad and fresh produce grown in Vietnam.

554-1 Sky Garden 2, Pham Van Nghi, D7

wine & liquor

Bacchus Corner

Bacchus imports from most of the world's wine regions and supplies wholesale and retail customers. It encourages wine tasting in its Pasteur store using the unique Enomatic system, and staff are skilled in advising on wine matches with food.

158D Pasteur, D1

Beer Plaza

Beer Plaza has an extensive range of international beers in stock. Connoisseurs will be pleased to find all of their favorite varieties of beer along with unique glassware.

94-96 Le Lai, D1

Boutique Collar

All about wine, lots and lots of wine. Priding itself in being the sole distributors of premium wineries around the world.

11 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1

Shop Thai Duong

Beer, wine, & spirits importers. Previously known as Tan Mai.

54 Ham Nghi, D1

The Warehouse

A premium wine importer, distributor, and retailer supplying wines from all over the world, the Warehouse also offers spirits, wine accessories, glassware and refrigeration to complement their customers' choices.

15/5 Le Thanh Ton, D1

Vinifera

Established in 2002, Vinifera is one of the most reliable wine distribution companies in Vietnam. Offering prestigious wines from around the world at a great value.

15C7 Thi Sach, D1

Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY TONY KUEHN





Island Life

Nusa Lembongan, a small island between Bali and Nusa Penida in Badung Strait, is the perfect holiday hideaway with few visitors and pristine unspoilt beaches

TEXT BY **STEPHENIE HARRISON** IMAGES BY **TONY KUEHN**

IN ALL HIS WISDOM, the Buddha once counseled, “It is better to travel well than to arrive.”

Gazing out across the roiling waters of the Bali Sea where the tip of a slowly sinking ferry boat bobs beneath a tide of crashing waves, I am beginning to wonder whether I might not live long enough to experience either of those things.

A 60 kilometer swath of water known as the Bandung Strait separates Bali, Indonesia from a cluster of three islands known collectively as Pulau Penida. It is one of the most turbulent passages in the region, and the journey is made all the more perilous by the relatively dubious safety records of Indonesian ferries, which do little to inspire confidence in their passengers even in the most serene sailing conditions.

But boats are the only means of reaching this trio of islands, and perhaps it is this nautical gauntlet that every traveler must face to ensure that on the other side paradise still awaits. With no cars, no Western chains, spotty Wi-Fi, and sometimes even no electricity, a voyage across the strait is said to be like traveling back in time, to the glory days of Bali 20 years ago.

From largest to smallest, the islands that beckon across the water are Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan, and Nusa Ceningan. All have their charms, but I am like the fabled Goldilocks, fixated on the mid-sized Lembongan. It is the most developed and visited of the three — boasting everything from mangrove forests and fishing villages to Balinese temples and killer surf

breaks, it seems to have a little something for everyone. The consensus is that Lembongan is neither too big nor too small, not too busy or too quiet, but just right. It sounds like perfection, but watching as the boat offshore finally slips to a watery grave, it’s hard to shake the sense that this is anything but a terrible omen.

The following day breaks with the sorbet hues of dawn punching through dollops of cloud as the sky swiftly shifts from warm to cool tones that match the surface of the sea. Rumor has it that the crossing is calmer earlier in the day, and I am first in line to buy tickets for the public boat that will ferry us across. I have heard horror stories of boats being dangerously overcrowded and overloaded, of passengers sharing the space with all manner of



livestock for the 90-minute crossing, so I'm relieved to find that when we cast off, there are only a handful of other passengers and plenty of room to spare.

Although initially placid, about an hour into our journey the water turns choppy and hostile. Massive waves tear themselves from the sea and batter angrily against the sides of the boat. Our captain does his best to steer the doddering craft around the swells, but even still, we are tossed about like rag dolls on a rollercoaster. It never feels as though we are in danger — the crew is unflappably nonchalant, suggesting these conditions are nothing to worry about — but just the same, I'm glad I caught the early boat. I'd hate to be out here when the weather is actually a concern.

As Nusa Lembongan finally glides into view, all cares and worries disappear. Watching as the frothing waves crash against the rocky southwestern coastline and families frolic on the soft powdered sand of pristine beaches, I know the journey has been worth it. Salty splashes of chilly seawater against my cheeks and forehead assure me this is not a mirage and, with shrieks of laughter ringing in the air as groups are zipped along on banana boats, I smile with happiness. When I tear my eyes from the island before me, I note that every single person on the boat shares

my look of satisfaction.

Diving In Feet First

Although Nusa Lembongan is far from undiscovered, it is still more untouched than not. Most of the boats lining the main beach are used for fishing or diving, and as there is no dock, visitors must splash knee deep in the water and make their way to shore on foot. From there, it's a quick walk across silky sand to the main road (effectively the island's *only* road), which circumscribes Lembongan like a crooked halo. Lining its length along the western side of the island are a handful of casual eateries (*warungs*) where locals and visitors dine side-by-side, charming homestays set within traditional Balinese courtyard complexes, and plenty of dive and surf shops. Noticeably absent? Any kind of bars or clubs — Lembongan is fiercely protective of its laidback, low-key island vibe and prides itself on its complete lack of nightlife. Evenings are spent on the beach (or beachside restaurants) watching the sun burn low in the sky, sipping a few cold beers and tucking into some fresh caught seafood; if you're lucky, you'll dine on grilled tuna dipped in a potent *sambal* made of chili, shallots and lime. Every morning, the head of my host family sets out in his boat to catch the family's

supper; every evening, I return from my adventures to find they have saved me my own massive fish, while the family of five shares one of comparable size. I protest their generosity, but they are resolute and I never go to bed hungry. Come 10pm, the last of the lights are out and the only sound is the crashing of the waves until morning is heralded by the crowing of the neighborhood roosters.

I spend my first days on Lembongan diving — apart from surfing, it's the island's primary tourist attraction. Ironically, the influx of cold water that makes the journey here so tempestuous is one of the main things that makes the voyage worthwhile: the confluence of warm and cool waters also brings brilliant marine life. Smack-dab in the middle of what is known as the Coral Triangle, Lembongan offers some of the best diving and the greatest biodiversity in the world. I am lucky enough to be here during prime *mola mola* season; also known as ocean sunfish, these creatures can weigh up to 1,000kg and can reach up to three meters in height. Despite their size, they are notoriously elusive and although I brave the chilly waters seven times and gaze upon the graceful glide of manta rays and the curious courtship of cuttlefish (not to mention the hundreds of other beautiful



“I am hypnotized, my mind reeling as I attempt to categorize every shade of blue of the water before me. Azure, cerulean, aquamarine, sapphire... I run out of adjectives long before the bay runs out of chromatic shifts to dazzle me”

creatures that dwell beneath the waves), I never spot these beautiful behemoths. A disappointment, certainly, but I still count the diving here some of the best I have experienced in Asia.

Encouraged by the beauty found underwater, I am pleased to find that exploring Lembongan by land is rewarding in its own right as well. At eight square kilometers, the island is sufficiently compact that it doesn't take much time or effort to get around, but is just big enough that to fully explore, walking isn't really an option. The ring road is paved, and although riddled with potholes, it makes for an unchallenging ride on a motorbike, which can be easily rented from any guesthouse for about USD6

a day (helmet included).

Cliffhangers

One of the joys of Lembongan is that it's impossible to get lost, so there's no need for a map. Puttering down the main strip, I do a lazy clockwise loop of the island, a tour that shows me the many sides to life here that make Lembongan so special. Starting in Jugut Batu, the busiest section of the island, I zip past traditional homes with smoldering sticks of incense and colorful floral offerings for the gods laid on their doorsteps. Rounding a bend in the road, I leave the village behind me, faced instead with ramshackle huts on quiet beaches where locals waded out waist

deep to harvest seaweed. Sarongs dripping and arms laden with hanks of algae, they lay their bounty out to dry. It may not be glamorous work, but this is the island's primary industry — these precious bundles are richly prized ingredients for the Asian cosmetics industry — and it is this humble commodity, rather than tourist dollars, that keeps the island afloat.

Pushing on down a sandy stretch, I reach the edges of a dense mangrove forest that can only be toured in a rickety little dinghy whose seaworthiness seems questionable. Instead, I return to the ring road and ride through dense woods passing a little yellow bridge that connects Lembongan to its tinier sibling, Ceningan. For those feeling a bit stir-crazy, Ceningan is a popular diversion, famed locally as it is for its surf spots, sunsets and — for the truly daring — some epic cliffs from which adrenaline junkies vault into the deep blue. Alas, the bridge is under much-needed construction and smartly closed to all traffic, so rather than testing my mortality, I continue down the road to Mushroom Bay and the spectacular Sunset Beach. As the surf crashes against the rocky cliffs and the icy froth sluices across the pearly white sand of the beach, I am hypnotized, my mind reeling as I attempt to categorize every shade of blue of the water before me. Azure, cerulean, aquamarine, sapphire... I run out of adjectives long before the bay runs out of chromatic shifts to dazzle me.



The beauty of this spot paralyzes me. I am so reluctant to leave it, that I splurge for lunch at one of Lembongan's few upscale resorts, The Beach Club at Sandy Bay, indulging in a duck and *boudin noir* sandwich perfectly complemented with soft slices of apple and sprigs of fresh thyme. This is about as far from the local fare as one can get, but one cannot live on grilled fish and rice alone. My meal is accompanied only by the susurrus of the waves, the soundtrack of paradise.

Afterwards, I work off my decadent meal by walking down the beach and scrabbling over the jagged rocks to visit the Devil's Tear, one of the island's most famous geographical attractions. Years of turbulent tides have worn away a small cauldron in the wall of rock, forming a dramatic outcropping where the water churns and swirls with violence. Occasionally a blast of spray bursts upwards, forcing a shimmering rainbow to briefly sparkle in the mist. It is the perfect place to sit for a few hours, marvel at the power and perfection of nature, while the sun dips in the sky. Even with a scattering of clouds hanging low on the horizon, it's clear how Sunset Beach got its name.

Most of my days on the island follow a similar pattern — there's not much else to do than to slowly explore the nooks and crannies of the island, inevitably returning to this spot as dusk settles in and afternoon slides into evening. I only intend to spend

"Truthfully, Lembongan is the kind of place where it's easy to fall into a routine, to while away the days doing not much of anything but simply soaking in the surroundings and it's easy to understand how people get sucked in and stay far longer than intended"

a handful of days here, but I find myself reluctant to leave and wind up extending my stay to a week and then again until 10 days have passed, much of them the same, but peaceful and happy nonetheless. Truthfully, Lembongan is the kind of place where it's easy to fall into a routine, to while away the days doing not much of anything but simply soaking in the surroundings and it's easy to understand how people get sucked in and stay far longer than intended. If time does not exactly stand still here, it at least seems to slow to a crawl, content to let the world pass it by.

A question hangs in the air as to just how long the island can preserve its sleepy ways, and there is some sense that travelers

should enjoy it while they can before it follows in Bali's footsteps or is overrun like the better-known Gilli islands that float off the coast of Lombok. If that day should come, it will be a sad one indeed. For now, however, it's nice to know that on Lembongan, a paradise long thought lost can still be found. ■

Bio: Originally from Toronto, Canada, **Stephenie Harrison** is an award-winning writer with a serious case of wanderlust. In 2012, she sold all her possessions, bought a one-way ticket to Tokyo and has been eating her way through Asia ever since. She documents her adventures on her travel site, www.20yearshence.com

This Country Life

IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

Vietnam is still a highly agrarian society with eighty percent of the population living in rural villages scattered throughout the lowlands of Chau Doc, the mountainous areas in Dalat and the coastal line running along Hoi An. The countryside is filled with bamboo-hedged villages, beautiful patchworks of green paddies, hard-working farmers in their conical hats, and water buffaloes. They live in a small community with a temple or a communal cultural house where great events, such as festivals worshipping the village god and traditional games are organized. Unlike life in the countryside which is often considered to be simple and traditional, life in the city is modern and complicated. ■







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Luggage 101

Picking out the best bag for you

THERE'S A POINT in the *Confessions of a Shopaholic* series where Rebecca Bloomwood has an epiphany in the luggage department. "Luggage! Why have I never thought of luggage?" she screams, gleeful to discover a whole new world of things to buy. As somewhat of a hyper traveler, I've been in love with luggage ever since I got my first passport.

Walking back to my hotel in Tokyo's Asakusa neighborhood a few months ago, I passed by a sign for "The World Bags and Luggage Museum." How had I never heard of this? Intrigued, I entered the nondescript office building and was shown to the 7th floor to find what turned out to be hundreds of bags, the personal collection

of Ryusaku Shinkawa, the founder of ACE, a Japanese luggage manufacturer. There were Louis Vuitton steamer trunks designed to float in case of emergency, rounded cases from the Wild West days (rounded to avoid rain penetration when traveling by open coach, and later so that they'd have to be stacked on top of trunks, thereby receiving less wear and tear), gorgeous Italian leather bags from the 1960s and even an old school Pan Am shoulder bag — in short, a history of travel presented through luggage.

Seeing a display showing the dozens of pieces that go into making a modern-day suitcase proved the impetus for this month's column: basic factors to consider



Having visited nearly 60 countries as a travel writer and award-winning photographer, James Pham blogs about his adventures at FlyCarausFly.com

when choosing your next piece of luggage.

Soft vs. Hard

For a recent around-the-world trip, I bought a beautiful piece of hard-sided luggage. It survived impossibly crowded trams in Istanbul, unforgiving train station stairwells in Rome and uneven pavement in the Caribbean. I loved knowing that my fragile souvenirs were safely tucked away and that the latches were much harder to open than vulnerable zippers (search for "zipper+suitcase+pen" on Youtube to see how frighteningly easy it is to open and re-close a locked, zipped suitcase with just a ballpoint pen). Unfortunately, on the very last leg of my trip, the hard plastic shell got





cracked on the bottom which I sadly did not notice until a month later, making it impossible to seek compensation from the offending airline. It's now a very expensive way to store my winter clothes. For now, I'm sticking with abrasion-proof ballistic nylon, which turns out is the trend for Asian travelers. Tom Nelson of TUMI (Asia Pacific), a manufacturer of luxury luggage, talked to *Oi* on the differences between Asian and Western consumers: "It is interesting to note that hard-sided travel cases were traditionally very popular in this region [of Asia]. However, we are now seeing a bit of a shift where Asian consumers are increasingly opting to purchase soft-sided travel cases. Business and day bags are very popular in Asia. Male consumers in Asia particularly like the messenger and cross carry style totes. Comparatively, men in the US, from what we have seen, prefer to carry backpacks."

Two or Four Wheels?

Wheels have seen lots of improvements in the past few years, including bigger, more stable ones to what Tom describes as wheels "recessed into the body of the case to give it a lower center of gravity for stable multidirectional navigation and a more spacious interior compared to mounted wheels."

Personally, I look for sturdy spinner models (four wheels) for both carry-on and check-in which has saved my back / shoulder countless times when having to manage two big cases and a carry-on. With increasing fees for checked bags, both my travel backpacks are wheeled which makes them easier to overpack (but less likely to attract the attention of overzealous gate agents) but a breeze to move.

Design Aesthetics

While unusually shaped bags are cool, bags which are more rectangular (as opposed to having rounded edges) offer maximum space. Think also about getting a bag with a unique design or color. In a 2009 bust, police captured a US couple who had stolen almost 1,000 bags from a nearby airport, most of the bags black or dark in color with no identifying marks. If a thief is caught with a non-descript bag, it's easier to say he mistook it for his own. But with everyone from high-performance vehicle manufacturers like Ducati and McLaren to fashion designer Alexander McQueen and home designer Jonathan Adler joining the luggage game, there's no reason to be resigned to basic black.

For frequent travelers, there's even more innovation on the horizon, either already for sale or in prototype, including suitcases that morph into kickboard-style scooters, strollers or seats (or all three!), self-weight or have motorized wheels. Traveling has never been so fun! ■



An Imperial Sojourn

They say it always rains in Hue



A professional artist and author of *A Week in Hoi An*, Bridget March specializes in urban landscapes and aims to reveal the hidden treasures of city life and small town cultures through her illustrations. Bridget is currently offering art classes and sketching tours in Hoi An until the summer. For more of Bridget's work including news of her upcoming book visit brushwithasia.blogspot.com.



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIDGET MARCH

IT WAS THE END of the rainy season in Quang Nam, and a weekend break was needed after seemingly months of cold, damp weather. We were suffering from cabin fever and wondering how on earth it can feel like 10 degrees Celsius when it was actually 20? Coming from the UK, I am used to endless winters and dark, damp days but how can it feel like England in winter when I am so close to the equator? Answers on a postcard please...

We jumped on the train to Hue and began to trundle northward. The scenery was breathtaking. The single train track hugs the coastline along a shelf carved out of the mountain, which rises up to our left and spills down into the sea to our right.

Deep shaded ravines and sunny headlands of jungle meet the glistening blue East Sea. Way down below, if you press your nose against the window, you can see coves with pearly white sand that have never known human footprint. So romantic.

We pass little hill stations where local trains take villagers and goods to the market. Some girls come aboard with

dried squid for sale. It's a favorite snack with cold beer. Men inspect the wares and spirited bargaining begins. When the guard comes down the train, the girls hide their squid and feign sleep until he passes by.

At last we arrive in Hue and step out into the main street. Instantly, there is a feeling of elegance, education and the kind of confidence that envelopes you in the streets of ancient cities. I like it very much. We walk the full length of the town to our hotel and view the haunting fortifications of the citadel on the other side of the mysterious Perfume River. It wasn't raining.

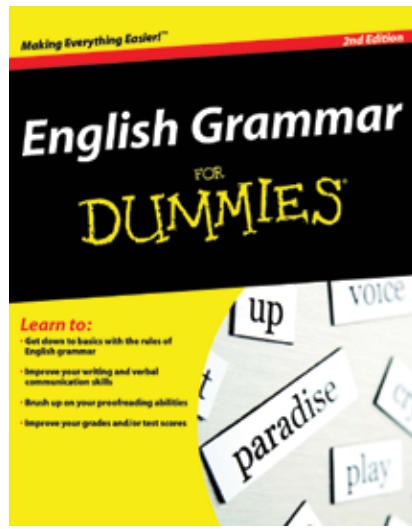
We hired bicycles and toured the inside of the perimeter wall of the citadel. This was one of the most delightful days I have ever spent in Vietnam. These walls enclose a small town where all aspects of life take place. The fortifications are so thick that people build their homes on top and plant vegetable gardens too. Each dwelling has a brightly painted shrine outside (or three, or four, or five) and all the gateways have been newly painted for Tet. Showy gateways are *de rigueur* in

this town but many of them, though fit for a mansion, adorn simple one room old houses!

Everyone says "hello" as we cycle by. We stop to let a couple of promenading cows pass. I find an excellent example of craft mosaic adorning the gates of a temple along the way. The broken porcelain and pottery is interspersed with different colors of glass that catch the sun. I stop to take too many photos and ask some lunching women about its history. It's only five years old I'm told. I am astonished that this craft is alive and flourishing.

For the rest of our trip it rained. It rained and then rained some more. The light was subdued but the colors of paint on the old citadel gateways, the red lacquer and gold leaf of the restored halls and temples of the purple city were still electrifying and evocative of a bygone age of color and glory.

Whatever the weather, the history of Hue seems to seep out of the stones and the woodwork to linger in the mists of the Perfume River. As an artist, I found it to be a powerful and moving experience. ■



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www.metro-solutions.asia

Contact: Kate Tu
091 800 7160 | 08 3943 4223

Travel & Leisure

airlines

Air China

7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 3888
www.airchina.com

Air France

130 Dong Khoi, D1
3829 0981
mail.hcm@airfrance.fr
www.airfrance.com.vn

Asiana Airlines

39 Le Duan, D1
3822 2622
www.ea.flyasiana.com

Air Asia

No official office in Vietnam
www.airasia.com
Address of sales office: Noibai Airport, Terminal 1, International Departure Hall, 3rd Floor, Ha Noi
Website of agent: www.airasia.biz.vn
Phone: 04.37478953
95G - Ly Nam De - Phuong Cua Dong - Quan Hoan Kiem - Ha Noi
Tel: (04).37478953

Cathay Pacific Airlines

R502, 5th floor, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3
3822 3203
sgn#rnt@cathaypacific.com
www.cathaypacific.com

China Southern

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3829 6800
passengerservice@cs-sgn.com
www.csair.com

Emirates

15 Nguyen Hue, 14th Floor, Dist.1, HCMC
Email: ehvietnam@emirates.com
39113099
www.emirates.com/vn

Etihad

etihadairways.com

EVA Airlines

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 4488
www.evaair.com

JAL Japan Airlines

4F Hotel Nikko Saigon, 235 Nguyen Van Cu, Nguyen Cu Trinh, D 1
3830 6231

Jetstar

112 Hong Ha, Ward 2, Tan Binh Dist., HCMC
Tel. 08 38450092
servicecomments@jetstar.com.vn
www.jetstar.com

Korean Air

Unit 909, Floor 9, Diamond Plaza, 34 Le Duan, D1
3824 2878
www.korean-air.vn

Lufthansa

14th Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1
3829 8529
lufthansa.vn@dlh.de
www.lufthansa.com

Malaysia Airlines

37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
www.malaysiaairlines.com

Qantas Airways

186 - 188 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3910 5373

Qatar

Suite 8, GF, Petro Vietnam Tower
1-5 Le Duan St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower,

Singapore Airlines

29 Le Duan, D1
3823 1588
www.singaporeair.com

Thai

29 Le Duan Blvd, D1

Turkish

Sales office in Vietnam
76 Le Lai St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower, D1

United Airlines

Unit 708, 7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
www.united.com

Vietnam Airlines

16F Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
www.vietnamairlines.com.vn

Vietjet

CT Plaza Building 8th Floor, 60 Trung Son St., Tan Binh Dist., HCMC
84 8 35471866 / Hotline: 1900 1886
www.vietjetair.com

hotels

HO CHI MINH CITY

TWO STAR

Bali Hotel

★★
Ideally-located for attendees to any exhibitions held at the Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre, Bali Boutique is flash and modern in style - with a little touch of the plush thrown in for good measure.
39 - 41 Hung Phuoc Villas, D 7
54104747

Calmette Hotel

★★
Charming hotel on one of the most attractively-named streets in the city, although slightly out-of-the-way. Quality, elegant furnishings and modern amenities.
151 Calmette, D 1
39144951

Cat Huy Hotel

★★
Cat Huy is the best-kept secret of the backpacker district, located in a peaceful and very local-looking alley close to the downtown area of Ho Chi Minh City, but culturally part of deep suburban Saigon.
353/28, Pham Ngu Lao, D 1
39208717

Ken Hotel

★★
A surprisingly well-designed hotel, this budget establishment looks anything but from within, although the location in

a side alley off CMT8 is quite deceiving.
285/7 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D 10
0906699371

Little Saigon Boutique Hotel

★★
A small, value-for-money boutique hotel with 18 air-conditioned, non-smoking rooms, Little Saigon Boutique Hotel is an easy walk to Ben Thanh Market and other D1 sights. Hidden away in a quiet back alley right in the central area.
36 Bis/2 Le Loi, D 1
35218462

THREE STAR

A&EM Hotel - 8A Thai Van Lung

★★★
Local accommodation chain that aims at the classy mid-level market; still budget, but with a touch of dignity about it.
8A/1D2 Thai Van Lung, D 1
38224495

Bizu Boutique Hotel Phu My Hung

The hotel's 24 guestrooms are all designed with guests' comfort in mind, featuring wireless Internet access along with all the basic facilities. Other features at the hotel include a restaurant, billiards, karaoke, 24hr room service 24hr, an elevator, laundry service/dry cleaning and meeting facilities.
15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7
5411 1008

Blue Diamond Hotel

★★★
A cut above the multiple nearby 2-star properties, this hotel has been officially recognized for its quality décor and service, including high accolades in international publications.
48-50 Thu Khoa Huan, D 1
38236167

Bong Sen Hotel

★★★
Located in the heart of D 1, The Bong Sen Hotel offers luxurious accommodation for guests who wish to relax or get a little work done.
117-123 Dong Khoi, D 1
38291516
www.bongsenhotel.com

Boutique Garden Hotel

Newly opened in 2012 and conveniently located close to Phu My Hung, FV Hospital and Tam Duc Hospital, guests can choose from 20 rooms.
R3-84 Hung Phuoc 3, D7
5410 5941

Catina Saigon

★★★
Hotel Catina Saigon provides 3 star accommodation in large, boutique rooms that include free, high-speed internet access and city views.
109 Dong Khoi, D 1
38296296

EMM Hotel Saigon

★★★
The 56 air-conditioned guestrooms at EMM Hotel Saigon include laptop-compatible safes and minibars. Complimentary wireless and wired high-speed Internet access and in-room

refrigerators are provided. 32-inch LED TVs are equipped with premium cable channels. All accommodations provide desks, safes, and direct-dial phones.
157 Pasteur, D3
01663221322

Ibis Hotel Saigon South

The 3-star Ibis Hotel Saigon South is located in front of Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre and only 15 minutes from the city centre. It features 140 rooms with free Wifi internet access, a restaurant/bar and 3 meeting rooms. There is a free Ibis shuttle available to and from the hotel to major corporate offices and the city centre.
73 Hoang Van Thai, D7
www.ibis.com

Tan Hai Long Hotel & Spa- Nguyen An Ninh

★★★
3 star hotel and spa located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh city with 160 rooms and suites, also providing professional spa services by skillful and experienced staff
15-17-19 Nguyen An Ninh, D 1
38272738

FOUR STAR

Hotel Continental Saigon

★★★★
One of Saigon's oldest hotels, most graceful colonial properties, and historic places to stay, it is perhaps most famous as the location where much of Graham Greene's The Quiet American was written in room 214.
132-134 Dong Khoi, D 1
38299201
www.continentalsaigon.com

Kimdo Royal City Hotel

★★★★
Nestled in amongst the commercial buildings at the top of District One's central business strip, the posh-looking Kimdo is right in the heart of the administrative, business, shopping, and entertainment district.
133 Nguyen Hue, D 1
38225914
www.kimdohotel.com

Liberty Central Hotel

★★★★
Liberty Central has a very prominent brand and is a particularly stylish, eye-catching property right in the centre of the tourist district.
179 Le Thanh Ton, D 1
38239269
www.libertycentralhotel.com

Norfolk Hotel

★★★★
Chic, warm exterior with boutique charms within, this property is an ideal escape for business travellers from the plasticity of chain hotels.
117 Le Thanh Ton, D 1
38293415
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn

Novotel Saigon Centre

★★★★
One of HCMC's newest hotels, Novotel is located on busy Hai Ba Trung St, just within walking distance of downtown attractions. It's everything you'd expect

from the international brand with 24-seven guest services and a broad dining offer.

167 Hai Ba Trung, D 1
38224866
www.novotel.com

Oscar Saigon Hotel

French colonial hotel in District 1 offering stunning panoramic views and 4 star amenities.

68A Nguyen Hue, D 1
www.oscar-saigonhotel.com

Palace Hotel Saigon

One of the tidier properties of its class within the vicinity, with 144 deluxe guest rooms of contemporary design well-equipped with modern facilities.

56-66 Nguyen Hue, D 1
www.palacesaigon.com

Park Royal Saigon Hotel

Park Royal Saigon Hotel is an ideally placed conference hotel which caters to all MICE needs. The hotel offers a wide array of banquet services and can accommodate 30 to 300 guests.

309B-311 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh
www.parkroyalhotels.com

Thao Dien Boutique Hotel

Set in a secluded, verdant garden occupying 1.2 hectares along the Saigon River, Thao Dien village is a tropical hideaway that's just 20 minutes from the city centre.

195 -197 Nguyen Van Huong, D 2
37442222
www.thaodienvillage.com

FIVE STAR

Caravelle Hotel

Part of the city's modern history since 1959, few properties in Saigon are quite as iconic. A major center for foreign correspondents during the war, it has emerged as a plush and vibrant luxury hotel in the present era. Caravelle Hotel is one of the city's classiest icons and represents a true slice of Saigon's history while remaining one of its most luxurious places to stay.

19 Lam Son Square, D 1
38234999
www.caravellehotel.com

Equatorial Ho Chi Minh City

An international hotel located where the borders of the city's four main districts meet. The city's major commercial and entertainment area is only an 8-minute drive away.

242 Tran Binh Trong, D 5
38397777
www.equatorial.com/hcm

InterContinental Asiana Saigon

***** 🏠 **Oi's Pick**
Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, the InterContinental Asiana Saigon is dedicated to providing local, authentic, and enriching travel experiences. Decorated in tasteful oriental flair, the hotel is dedicated to representing the charms of Asia and evokes the mystique of this beautiful continent and its cultures. Right next to Saigon's key landmarks, this hotel is ideally placed for high-class travellers and groups seeking a high standard of accommodation. Full MICE areas and facilities are on-site.

Corner Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
saigon@ihg.com
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon

Classic hotel offering 5 star amenities along with a scenic view of the Saigon River, and providing a unique culinary experience with many options for fine dining.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D 1
38233333
www.legendssaigon.com

Majestic Saigon

One of HCMC's oldest and most characteristic hotels, the Majestic on the Saigon River with its grand French architecture is just a few steps away from Saigon's premiere attractions.

01 Dong Khoi, D 1
38295517
www.majesticsaigon.com.vn

Moevenpick Hotel Saigon

An international hotel chain with Swiss roots, this comfortable hotel caters to both businesspeople and families with fine dining options, a fitness centre, and multiple conference rooms.

253 Nguyen Van Troi Apartments, Phu Nhuan
38449222
www.moevenpick-hotels.com

New World Saigon Hotel

***** 🏠 **Oi's Pick**
One of the most impressive business hotels in Ho Chi Minh City, with stunning views and 5 star amenities. 533 luxury rooms and suites offering the perfect ambience for concentrated work and undisturbed relaxation.

76 Le Lai, D 1
38228888
saigon@newworldhotels.com
www.saigon.newworldhotels.com

Nikko Saigon

One of the city's newest accommodation jewels, this lavish hotel is designed to make the maximum impression of austere Japanese-style class from the lobby upwards. This is one of the most luxurious hotels in HCMC, with classic, precise and elegant decor.

235 Nguyen Van Cu, D 1
39257777
www.hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn

Park Hyatt Saigon

Without a doubt the city's most luxurious hotel, Park Hyatt Saigon features French colonial inspired rooms, two award-winning restaurants, an outdoor pool and a stylish contemporary bar. The exterior is the result of meticulous research into the colonial architecture of the region.

2 Lam Son Square, D 1
38241234
www.saigon.park.hyatt.com

Pullman

The 306-room hotel features a contemporary design, a wide range of technological facilities, four bars and restaurants and five meeting venues. Offers signature services including Welcomer, optimal connectivity with the Connectivity by Pullman concept (free high-speed wifi throughout the hotel, Quadriga's Personal Media Network mobile application), the Co-Meeting offer for business event and functions and Fit and Spa Lounge by Pullman.

148 Tran Hung Dao, D1
Renaissance Riverside Hotel

A five-star hotel located in the heart of

Saigon's business and entertainment district. The hotel's 336 rooms and suites offer an incredible view of the Saigon River as well as over the city. Each guest room is designed and furnished with discerning business and leisure travelers in mind. Choose a deluxe room or suite with large desk and ample lighting, in-room coffee and tea service, high speed internet, safe, well-stocked mini-bar as well as the jack bag (connectivity kit).

8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 0033
www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/sgnbn-renaissance-riverside-hotel-saigon

Rex Hotel Saigon

Rex Hotel has consistently won awards for being one of the best hotels in Asia. Impeccable dining options, great location, and 5 star amenities make this recently refurbished hotel a preferred destination for travellers with generous budgets.

141, Nguyen Hue, Ben Nghe, D 1
38292185
www.rexhotelvietnam.com

Saigon Domaine Luxury Residences

***** 🏠 **Oi's Pick**
High-class getaway hotel located out of the city centre on exotic Thanh Da Island, allowing guests to escape from the chaos of the city life while remaining close to the action. More hotel than apartment complex, The Domaine's private residences are classic and luxurious, making the most of the natural surroundings.

1057 Binh Quoi, Binh Thanh
35561145
www.saigondomaine.com

Sheraton Saigon Hotel And Towers

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City vibrant business and entertainment district, Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers is a 5 star haven of convenience, connecting guests with colleagues and friends.

88 Dong Khoi, D 1
38272828
sheratonsaigon@sheraton.com

Sofitel Saigon Plaza Hotel

The Sofitel Saigon Plaza is located in the city center, in the heart of the business district and close to Notre Dame Cathedral and Reunification Palace. 275 elegant rooms and 11 suites, a swimming pool, and a fitness center.

17 Le Duan, D 1
38241555
H2077@Sofitel.com
www.sofitel.com/gb/html-2077-sofitel-saigon-plaza/index.shtml

Windsor Plaza

Located in the heritage area of old Cholon, the Windsor offers authentic Vietnamese and Chinese hospitality with a mix of commercial, cultural, and retail experiences - and they put on a fine buffet.

18 An Duong Vuong, D 5
www.windsorplazahotel.com

CON DAO ISLAND

Six Senses Con Dao

True to the Six Senses philosophy of selecting remote (but accessible) destinations in areas of outstanding natural beauty, Con Dao is an untouched and breathtakingly beautiful

area. Con Dao has been built with the very lightest ecological footprint, with villas set up along a mile of sandy beach, sheltered by the green forested hills behind and with stunning vistas of the deep blue sea and the curve of the bay.

Dat Doc Beach, Con Dao, Con Son
06 4383 1222

DALAT

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat comprises seventeen restored French-style villas from the 1920's and 1930's, preserving the original design, décor and charm, is and set in the cool climate of the rural highlands of Central Vietnam. Striking views of the surrounding town and countryside abound from all areas of the gently sloping hillside property.

Le Lai, Phung 5, Dalat
06 3355 5888

Blue Moon Hotel & Spa

Located in the heart of breathtaking Dalat, the Blue Moon Resort & Spa is designed to complement the natural beauty of the "City of Eternal Spring." Built opposite the popular and tranquil Xuan Huong Lake, Blue Moon is centrally located and convenient to Dalat's eating, shopping and entertainment spots. Much more than just a comfortable night's sleep, Blue Moon Resort & Spa invites you to experience true hospitality.

4 Phan Boi Chau, Dalat 67, Vietnam
www.bluemoonhotel.com.vn/bluemoon2

Dalat Edensee Lake Resort & Spa

Dalat Edensee Lake Resort & Spa is perched on an idyllic location overlooking Tuyen Lam lake and gently undulating hills. It has four categories of rooms, including VIP villas, all with stunningly furnished rooms, spacious balconies offering sweeping mountain and/or lake view, and subtle finishing touches.

Tuyen Lam Lake, Zone VII.2, Dalat
(063) 383 1515
www.dalatedensee.com

Dalat Green City Hotel 🏠 **Oi's Pick**

Budget hotel in the center of Dalat. Five minutes from most major attractions in Dalat. Quiet. Newly refurbished. Beautiful mountain and city views from the rooftop. Features free WiFi, TV, snack bar in all rooms. Coffee shop downstairs. Airport pickup by private car. Motorbike rental. Tour information. Laundry. Computers in lobby for public use.

172 Phan Dinh Phung, Dalat
(063) 3827 999
www.dalategreencityhotel.com

Dalat Train Villa & Cafe 🏠 **Oi's Pick**

Located near the Dalat Train Station, the Dalat Train Villa is for short or long staying guests. The villa is a restored 2-story French colonial-era villa. Next to the villa is a French train car, which has been renovated into a bar/cafe/restaurant. Romantic venue. From the lake, take first left after Dalat Train Station.

1 Quang Trung St, Ward 9, Villa #3
(063) 381 6365 or 090 334 2442
www.dalatrainvilla.com

Sofitel Dalat Palace

Hotel Sofitel Dalat Palace is one of the most beautiful and amongst the few remaining historical hotels in Southeast Asia. Built in 1922 and meticulously restored in 1995 to its original grandeur, the Sofitel Dalat Palace offers

individualized service in the finest tradition of Vietnamese hospitality.

12 Tran Phu, Dalat
06 3382 5444
info@dalatresorts.com

DANANG

Furama Resort Danang

 The Furama Resort enjoys a stunning beachfront location on one of Vietnam's finest beaches, fringed by natural pines and coconut palms. Two four-storey wings overlook the ocean on one side and a freshwater swimming lagoon and manicured tropical gardens on the others.

Trung Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1384 7333

Fusion Maia

 It is the first all-pool villa-style resort in the destination and offers 87 pool suites, spa villas, and beach villas each with modern, open-plan living and private courtyard with swimming pool. Customize-your-stay options and breakfast available at multiple locations are a few of the surprising offers in store.

Trung Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1396 7999

Life Resort Danang

 A pair of four-storey hotel blocks house most of the resort's rooms, with villas flanking one side of a long pool corridor splicing the middle of the resort.

Trung Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1395 8888

HALONG BAY

Novotel Halong Bay

 A glimpse into contemporary Vietnam with echoes of the country's intricate past through its elegant interior décor. Sturdy polished stone, glass and marble stand against the delicate Asian textures of silk, wickerwork and carved wood. With sweeping windows and large mirrors, the hotel captures panoramic views of Halong Bay and its spectacular seascapes at every turn.

Ha Long Road, Bai Chay Ward, Ha Long City
03 3384 8108
info@novotelhalong.com.vn

TUAN CHAU RESORT

 Tuan Chau Resort is constructed in the style of classical French and modern Vietnamese architecture. This is the ideal place to find white sands, blue ocean, and the rejuvenative energy of the Vietnamese tropical sun.

Tuan Chau Island, Ha Long City

HANOI

Hilton Hanoi Opera

 This landmark of Hanoi was inspired by the famous Opera House located nearby. A hotel of great beauty and luxury, the Hilton stands in the city's fashionable and elegant French Quarter, and is within close range of the charming Old Quarter and bustling Business District.

1 Le Thanh Tong, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi
04 3933 0500

Intercontinental Westlake

 Superbly situated on the serene waters of Hanoi's West Lake and adjacent to the famous 800-year-old Golden Lotus (Kim Lien) Pagoda. Conveniently

located and yet able to offer a retreat from the hustle and bustle of downtown Hanoi, the combination of spacious luxurious accommodations, facilities, and attentive Vietnamese hospitality make this the perfect place to stay for both the corporate and leisure traveler.

la Nghi Tam Tay Ho, Hanoi
04 6270 8888

Sheraton Hanoi

 Perfectly located by the shores of the largest lake in Hanoi and surrounded by a beautifully landscaped garden and courtyard, the hotel provides the perfect balance between tranquility and convenience.

K5 Nghi Tam, 11 Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho, Hanoi
04 3719 9000

The Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

***** **👉 Oi's Pick**
 Features include 364 rooms and suites, excellent French cuisine at Le Beaulieu, Vietnamese specialties at Spices Garden, and Angelina - Hanoi's most "avant garde" Italian Restaurant & Lounge. Seven function rooms, a swimming pool, fitness centre and the Le Spa du Metropole are also available in the hotel.

15 Ngo Quyen, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi
04 3826 6919
hi555@sofitel.com

HOI AN

Life Heritage Resort Hoi An

 Rooms are designed along Japanese themes, each having a personal porch with couches for reading and relaxing. Spacious bathrooms feature stand-alone showers or recessed baths, and many bathrooms enjoy views of a private garden.

1 Pham Hong Thai, Hoi An Town, Quang Nam
051 0391 4555

The Nam Hai

 A stunning all-villa resort located on the pristine China Beach featuring 60 one-bedroom retreats as well as 40 privately-owned two-to-five bedroom residences each with a private infinity pool.

Hamlet 1 Dien Duong Village, Dien Ban, Quang Nam
051 0394 0000

Boutique Hoi An Resort **👉 Oi's Pick**

 Boutique Hoi An Resort offers 82 rooms and villas, with all rooms facing the sea with private balconies. Other facilities include spa with 3 treatment rooms and 5 massage pavilions, fully-equipped gym, restaurant, lobby lounge and pool bar and conference facilities accommodating 80 guests for dinner functions and 130 guests for cocktail parties.

Group 6, Block Tan Thinh, Ward Cam An, Hoi An City
www.boutiquehoianresort.com

HUE

Ana Mandara Hue

 Located a scenic 15km drive from central Hue, this is spacious resort with the largest villas and rooms in the area. The property includes private pool villas, beach villas, duplex and deluxe rooms in a wide range of styles and decor designed with complete and modern facilities.

An Hai Village, Thuan An Town, Hue Phu Vang
05 4398 3333

La Residence Hotel & Spa

 This former French Governor's residence dates to 1930 and is a masterpiece of art deco design. Its incredible location overlooking the Citadel and the Perfume River brings this 122-room hotel a total and serene tranquility. The hotel features a 40m outdoor salt swimming pool at river height giving the illusion of merging into the Perfume River. Ideal for executive retreats and exotic incentives programmes.

5 Le Loi, Hue
05 4383 7475

Pilgrimage Village

 Pilgrimage Village offers the harmony of a soothing natural environment and fascinating local culture. Delicious meals, sound sleep, and the peaceful life of the quiet countryside refresh the spirit.

130 Minh Mang, Truong An, Hue
05 4388 5461

NHA TRANG

Evason Ana Mandara

 The exclusive location affords city-centre access to Nha Trang's only beachfront resort. It is surrounded by private tropical gardens, offering simplicity, serenity and refinement together with spectacular views of Nha Trang Bay. Unforgettable incentive experience.

Beachside Tran Phu Boulevard, Nha Trang
05 8352 2222

Six Senses Ninh Van Bay

 The resort is one of Asia's most exclusive and intimate beach escapes, sitting on dramatic Ninh Van Bay, with its impressive rock formations overlooking the South China Sea, white sand beach and towering mountains behind.

Ninh Van, Khanh Hoa
05 8372 8222

Sheraton Nha Trang

 Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa offers ten categories of accommodation – from spacious, deluxe rooms to 70m² executive suites and a huge presidential suite. With exemplary conference facilities, this is the number-one MICE resort in the region.

26-28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang
05 8388 0000

PHAN THIET

Anantara Mui Ne Resort & Spa

 The new face of the former l'Anmien, this resort offers an exclusive haven of luxury and relaxation in a spectacular beachfront location right in the heart of Mui Ne. The only property in the Mui Ne district with full conferencing facilities and a range of exclusive villas – and it has an impressive wine cellar.

Mui Ne

Princess d'Annam

 The two Empress Suites are the pinnacle of luxury accommodation in Vietnam – they are mini millionaire's mansions in themselves, fully-equipped, bright and spacious, and possessing of the same ethereal design quality that pervades this whole resort. Set in the remote Ke Ga Bay, wordlessly beautiful.

Hon Lan, Binh Thuan

06 2368 2222

Muine Bay Resort

Located in the Mui Ne Bay and overlooking the Hon Lao pristine island of blue sea, Muine Bay Resort includes 103 rooms in 4-stars standard of which 32 bungalows designed and inspired by the Cham Tower.

Khu pho 14, Mui Ne Ward, Phan Thiet
www.muinebayresort.com
0622220222

Sea Links Beach Hotel

Located within the Sea Links City complex resort, Sea Links Beach Hotel offers 188 elegant rooms and suites, four palatial-sized pools, restaurants and bars, spa, recreational amenities and the largest meeting facilities providing modern conveniences to every guest.

Km9 Nguyen Thong Road, Phan Thiet
www.sealinks-city.com
039304083

The Cliff Resort and Residences

Offers 128 rooms equipped with a myriad of amenities such as 3D smart TV, safe and mini bar as well as private bathroom. It boasts an extensive lap pool, a kid's pool and pool bar as well as submerged on deck swimming pool chairs. Its restaurant serves a selection of local seafood specialties and Western cuisine.

Zone 5, Phu Hai Ward, Phan Thiet
www.theciffresort-binhthuan.com
0623719111

The Sailing Beach Resort

Offers a contemporary setting in sensual tropical harmony that befits its bay host. All 192 rooms, with spacious private balconies affording stunning ocean views, are scattered across tropical vegetation, ponds and rests steps from an endless beach.

107 Ho Xuan Huong, Phan Thiet
www.thesailingbay.com

WindFlower Beach Boutique Hotel

Located in the resort capital of Vietnam – Mui Ne Bay, WindFlower Beach Boutique Hotel offers an intimate setting for guests to enjoy a getaway on the beach to its fullest. The hotel is home to 24 cozy deluxe rooms with services and sophistication that are expected from a beach boutique hotel.

76 Huynh Thuc Khang, Mui Ne (Vietnamese) (06) 2374 3969 / (English) 090 291 3969
www.windflowermuine.com

PHU QUOC ISLAND

Chen Sea Resort & Spa

 Located in a quiet bay, this resort allows guests to enjoy the peace and natural beauty of Phu Quoc while also enjoying the exclusive atmosphere that the location suggests and the resort offers.

Bai Xep, Phu Quoc
07 7399 5895

Saigon Phu Quoc Resort

 Located on a hill of coconut palm trees, Saigon Phu Quoc is a beautiful, quiet seaside resort with plenty of sunshine. Just 10 minutes from the airport, the resort is an ideal haven for relaxing, fishing, trekking, snorkeling, and scuba diving.

62 Tran Hung Dao, Phu Quoc
07 7384 6999

La Veranda

 The most distinguished of Phu Quoc Island's hotels and guesthouses, La Veranda sports paddle fans, butter-yellow exteriors, whitewashed louvers, and tropical gardens recalling a colonial plantation. Freestanding deluxe villas are notable for their sea-facing porches,

spacious bathrooms, and cathedral ceilings.

Tran Hung Dao, Duong Dong Beach, Phu Quoc
07 7398 2988

Paris Beach Resort **Our's Pick**

Owned and managed by a friendly and hospitable French-Vietnamese woman and her French husband, the resort is located about a 15-minute taxi ride from the airport. It has an outdoor swimming pool, a private beachfront, recreation room, bicycles and a restaurant serving local and French food. Each room or bungalow has air conditioning, a mini bar, cable TV and free Wi-Fi. They also offer tours around the island.

Cua Lap, Duong To, Phu Quoc
www.phuquocparisbeach.com

QUY NHON

Life Wellness Resort Quy Nhon

★★★★

A hide-away style spa and beach destination set in 13.5 hectares of private mountainous land and beach. The tranquillity, splendid views, Cham-inspired architecture and surroundings are so far unmatched in Vietnam.

Ghenh Rang, Bai Dai Beach, Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh

Bai Tram Resort and Spa

★★★★★

Bai Tram is based on holistic ideals and the search for environmental balance embodying the trend towards seeing ourselves, the natural world, and the man-made environment as one.

Hoa Loi, Xuan Canh, Song Cau, Phu Yen
05 7372 2563

VUNG TAU

The Grand-Ho Tram Strip

The Grand - Ho Tram Strip is Vietnam's first largest integrated resort and ultimately will include an 1,100-room five-star hotel, a world-class casino, restaurants, high-tech meeting space, an exclusive VIP area, as well as a variety of beach-front recreation activities. The first 541-room tower of this development opened in July 2013 with its casino including 90 live tables and 614 electronic game positions. The second 559-room tower is on track to open in 2015.

Phuoc Thuan Commune, Xuyen Moc District

Tel: (64) 3788 888

www.thegrandhotramstrip.com

serviced apartments

Avila Serviced Apartment

These serviced apartments combine an excellent location with luxurious amenities.

20-20bis Thi Sach, D 1

Bella Serviced Apartments

Affordable, classy apartment living in a tidy alleyway residence styled with white classical flourishes. Facilities include a small but well-equipped gym on the top floor and pleasant terraces on front-facing apartments.

56/4 Nguyen Thong, D3

Cantavil Daewon Apartment

High-luxury complex with libraries, research center, and cultural information center on site. Also features an outdoor swimming pool. One of the most luxurious towers in the central area.

600A Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

Central Garden Apartment

These luxurious apartments offer

stunning views of downtown Saigon along with western style accommodations and excellent location. Clean, inner-city luxury compound close to the Ben Nghe River.

225 Ben Chuong Duong, D 1

City View

Located in the prime business and residential district, only minutes away by car from downtown area, City View is the perfect place for home and/or business in Ho Chi Minh City.

12 Mac Dinh Chi, D 1

Diamond Island Luxury Residences

Diamond Island Luxury Residences offers 68 fully-furnished apartments, ranging from two- to four-bedroom units with private balconies providing panoramic views of the stunning surroundings. Each apartment comes with a fully-equipped kitchen, en-suite bathrooms, separate work and living areas. Each lavish space features plush interiors, modern amenities, elegant furnishings and carefully chosen trimmings and fixtures, creating a luxurious harmony of comfort and tranquility that will have you relaxed and recharged, and functioning at peak performance.

No 01 - Street No.104-BTT, Quarter 3, Binh Trung Tay Ward, D2

096 829 3388 / 3742 5678

www.the-ascott.com

Garden Court

Completed in 2009, Garden Court is a luxury apartment building located close to schools, supermarkets and shopping centers and a golf course.

Garden Court, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Glenwood Serviced Apartment

A very modern property, located in the heart of the expatriate's residential area, steps away from Int'l schools and supermarket.

248A Nguyen Van Huong, D2

0944 168 568

Hung Vuong Plaza Apartment

Huong Vuong Plaza apartments above the D5 Parkson are comprised of two 29 floor buildings with many luxurious apartments in bustling Cho Lon.

126 Hong Bang, D 5

InterContinental Asiana Saigon Residences

It's a 31-floor tower with 260 rooms; the Residences offers superb panoramic views of downtown area and is part of the Kumho Asiana Plaza - the city's finest integrated complex featuring commercial, hotel, residential and a diverse choice of dining and dining outlets. They will also benefit from the preferred amenities at the InterContinental Asiana Saigon next door.

Corner of Le Van Huu & Nguyen Du

3520 8888

Jasmine Court Serviced Apartment

A boutique property with only 12 apartments, comprised of one and two-bedroom suites of various sizes. All apartments are designed in a fresh contemporary style and finished in a pleasing neutral colour scheme.

307/29 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh

Lancaster Serviced Apartments

Lancaster Serviced Apartments Le Thanh Ton enjoys a commanding position over the nightlife, culture, and business hub of Ho Chi Minh City, offering a sweeping panoramic view of the city skyline from virtually every window.

22 Bis Le Thanh Ton, D 1

The Landmark

The Landmark is a prestigious development of residential accommodation and office space situated in the heart of HCMC. The 16-storey complex, located on a prime waterfront site, was one of the first of its kind in the city.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D 1

38222098

Mai Ha Lan II Serviced Apartments

Mai Ha Lan II offers a sweeping panoramic view of the city skyline from virtually every window. It offers 33 luxurious and graciously furnished apartments with studio and two bedroom options.

8A/1C Thai Van Lung, D 1

Norfolk Mansion

A comfortable serviced luxury apartment in the city center, the Norfolk features an outdoor pool, gym & sauna, and high-class Cantonese restaurant.

17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, D 1

Riverside Apts

Overlooking the Saigon River, the compound offers short and long term leases.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2

www.riverside-apartments.com

River Garden Apartment

It is located within a 15-minute drive of downtown and provides its occupants with stunning views of the Saigon River in a resort type of environment.

170 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2

Saigon Court

Since its opening in 1998, Saigon Court has become well-known amongst the expatriate community for exceptional standards of service. This 12 storey building is among the highest in the area, offering its tenants commanding views of other parts of the city.

149 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D 3

Saigon Pearl Apartment

Ho Chi Minh City's largest five star apartment complex, Saigon Pearl comprises six 37-story residential towers located on the banks of the Saigon River in Binh Thanh District, about five minutes by taxi from downtown. Pool, gym, supermarket and dining facilities all on site.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

Saigon Skygarden

A 15-storey building located in the Saigonesse Little Tokyo on Le Thanh Ton, offering 172 international-standard Serviced Apartments for lease.

20 Le Thanh Ton, D 1

Saigon View Residences

Saigon View Residences offer a range of Deluxe, Superior, and Executive room types in distinctive one and two bedroom apartments.

117, Nguyen Cuu Van, Binh Thanh

Sedona Suites

With a fantastic location in District 1 and rooms offering all of the comforts of home, this award winning serviced apartment complex caters to businessmen and families alike.

65 Le Loi, D 1

Sherwood Residence

Serviced apartments available for short or long term bookings, located in Pasteur, within walking distance of downtown Ho Chi Minh City, international schools, shopping centres, etc. Pool, sauna, gym, mini-cinema onsite.

127 Pasteur, D 3

Sky Garden

Sky Garden is a huge complex of apartments including 42 buildings with more than 3,000 individual apartments set on 10.4 hectares.

Sky Garden, Nguyen Van Linh, D7

Somerset Ho Chi Minh City

Designed with families in mind, it provides relocating executives the space and security to build a warm and comfortable home. Friendly staff are always on hand to help with local knowledge. You can join in a wide range of social, cultural and lifestyle activities, especially designed to help you integrate into the local culture.

8A Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1

3822 8899

www.somerset.com/vietnam

Somerset Chancellor Court

Each of these 172 spacious serviced apartments in District 1 is fully-furnished with an open kitchen concept, contemporary western style décor, and a large balcony.

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D 1

38229197

Somerset Vista Ho Chi Minh City

It has an extensive array of modern facilities and provides convenient access to a hypermarket, international schools, a medical clinic, retail outlets and offices.

628C Hanoi Highway, D2

6255 9900

www.somerset.com/vietnam

The Crescent

The Crescent is located along the Crescent Lake in the heart of Phu My Hung New City Centre, offering an exclusive high-class lifestyle for locals and expats. This area consists of a variety of green parks, restaurants, luxury apartments, retail shops and entertainment venues.

101 Ton Dat Tien, D7

The Landmark

The Landmark features serviced apartments, offices, luxury dining, sports clubs, swimming pool at the rooftop of the building with great views of the Saigon River. It offers one bedroom, two bedroom and three bedroom units for rent. Amenities offered include wireless broadband Internet access, 100 percent power backup, room service, maid service and laundry, 24-hour reception and airport shuttle service.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D1

www.thelandmarkvietnam.com

Villa Song Saigon

Colonial-style, boutique apartments characterised by solid hardwood flooring and an outdoor swimming pool ensconced by verdant gardens.

197/2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2

V-Star Apartment

Good proximity to the Saigon River and FV International Hospital, as well as international schools and the Tan Thuan export zone.

Go O Moi, Phu Thuan, D 7

37733151

travel agencies

Asiana Travel Mate

Offering tours to magnificent scenic areas in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and India - the firm has

strong purchasing power in these regions, allowing it to offer heavily discounted rates.

92-96 Nguyen Hue, D1

Amazing Thailand Tourism Office

Funded by the Thai tourism board, this office is loaded up with travel resources and advice for travellers to Thailand, an invaluable source of help for travelers on their way to the land of smiles. Travel resources and advice for travelers to Thailand.

5th Floor, Empire Tower, 26-28 Ham Nghi, D1

Buffalo Tours

A premium travel agency that helps travelers customize their itinerary and destination packages. From corporate to small tour packages available.

81 Mac Thi Buoi, D1

www.buffalotours.com.vn

Clé Voyages - Xuan Viet Travel

Xuan Viet Travel has been providing travel services and advice for nearly two decades.

Unit 1105, Harbour View Tower, 35 Nguyen Hue, D1

Exotissimo Travel

Exotissimo Travel offers tours to Vietnam, the region and the whole wide world!

Local and regional tours for family and visitors are quick and easy to arrange, from standard to higher-end versions. Less common requests are tailor-built for you by friendly online operators and/or the pleasant District 2 location office.

A District 1 presence will re-open soon.

41 Thao Dien, D2

3519 4111

www.exotissimo.com

anphu@exotissimo.com

Fiditour

Fiditour offers a wide range of tours to the southeast Asian region, including unique cultural trips, adventure trips, beach holidays, cruises, and culinary trips.

129 Nguyen Hue, D1

Hoi An Express

Preferred by many five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh city such as Windsor Plaza Hotel, Duxton Hotel, Legend Hotel Saigon, and Equatorial Hotel, this privately owned travel agency offers a wide range of services.

94 Mac Thi Buoi, D1

Inside Asia Travel

Inside Asia Travel is a boutique luxury travel provider of tailor made travel arrangements for English speaking expats and travelers through Southeast Asia. Guests enjoy highly personalized, bespoke travel arrangements suited to individual tastes and budget.

www.insideasiatravel.com

3844 1005 (Ext: 221)

Saigon River Tour

Established in 1998, Saigon River Tour provides speedboat services and speedboat tours (ecotourism, Cu Chi Tunnels, Mekong Delta) from Bach Dang Pier.

10b Ton Duc Thang, D1

Viet Journey

Viet Journey was founded by dedicated travelers of the southeast Asian region, and they strive to

provide quality, time-efficient service for travelers from around the world.

18-19-20 Ton Duc Thang, D1

3823 7152

cinemas & theatres

The Ballet and Symphony Orchestra

Ho Chi Minh City's local classical music venue with regular programs & performances.

212 Nguyen Trai, D1

Ben Thanh Theatre

Once the cultural center of District 1 when it was built in 1995, this is a good air-conditioned theater for Vietnamese shows & cultural activities that can accommodate over 1000 people.

6 Mac Dinh Chi, D1

CT Plaza Megastar

This theater complex offers close proximity to shops for shoppers and many other attractions. Large cinema complex on the 7th floor with 3D theatres and VIP room.

Level 10, 60A Truong Son, Tan Binh

Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theater

Vietnamese water puppet show with live Vietnamese traditional music, this is an original performing art preserved and handed down for nearly a thousand years. Daytime performances by special arrangement.

55B Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1

Ho Chi Minh Conservatory Of Music

Offering world class musical education and performances. Concerts at the local Ho Chi Minh City Music School.

112 Nguyen Du, D1

IDECAF Drama Theatre

IDECAF is a theater holding French cultural exchanges as well as offering courses in French.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1

Saigon Opera House

The Municipal Theater is a thriving performance centre with regular musical and cultural shows - predominantly of the classical, high-brow, and top-dollar variety.

7 Lam Son Square, D1

The Soul of Vietnam

The Soul of Vietnam showcases traditional Vietnamese music shows with voice and traditional instruments. Be sure to check out the three-part Legend of the Trung Sisters' with accompaniment of stone musical instruments, gongs and two lifelike elephants.

7 Lam Son Square, D1

social clubs & classes

Brogolf Bar Wars

Group of barflies who meet regularly for golf, open to new members. First Saturday of each month, breakfast, brunch, and 18 holes with a caddy.

46-48 Ton That Thiep, D1

DanCenter

A professionally run dance studio with an international teaching team offering over 70 classes per week and workshops for kids and adults of all ages and abilities. Kids can start from age 4 with Dance Intro. Regular classes offered for kids and teens in

Sing & Dance, Jazz, Ballet, Tap, Hip Hop, Break & Acro Dance. Adults of any age, size and ability are also welcomed. Come and try Ballet, Jazz, Hip Hop, Tap, Contemporary, Belly and many more.

53 Nguyen Dang Giai, D2

3519 4490 / 3519 4340

www.dancentervn.com

Dat Nam Friendly Club

While it may ring of a bingo association, this is a fairly well-respected venue for entertainment and cultural exchange amongst foreigners and entrepreneurs - a very casual networking opportunity.

Basement Level, 116 Nguyen Du, D1

Hash House Harriers

Combining beer and running, this long-established club goes to various out of the city running areas to burn some calories. Departs from the Caravelle Hotel every Sunday at 2pm.

www.saigonh3.com

International Ladies of Vietnam

A women's group that meets Thursday mornings for coffee from 10am- noon at Sherwood Residences- 1st floor (127 Pasteur, D3) Cost for coffee and snacks is VND130,000. Membership is VND700,000 per year. Open to all ladies

Overland Club

Overland Club is a 100 percent foreign-owned Japanese company that organizes cultural classes including pottery (from basic to intermediate level, as well as painting unglazed pottery) and cooking classes (Japanese and Vietnamese).

36bis Huynh Khuong Ninh, D1

Rubber Duckies Swim Program

Group swim lessons for children ages six months - four-years- old. Parents and children participate together in songs and safe water activities. Instruction is focused on developing water safety habits, basic water skills and confidence in the water. Call/text 0122 3922 550

Saigon Cooking Class

Classes can include a market tour to buy the day's ingredients followed by a hands-on cooking class, organized twice a day from Tuesday till Sunday (US\$39.50 to 45.50). Team building programs also available.

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1

Saigon School of Imaging

Saigon School of Imaging runs introductory to advanced photography, Lightroom and Photoshop workshops in Saigon. Courses typically run every two months on weekends at Saigon Hub in D1. One-on-one, private small groups and custom workshops are also available.

www.saigonimaging.com

012 8569 8144

Saigon Swing Cats

Saigon Swing Cats organizes dance classes, workshops and events at various venues around HCMC including restaurants, lounges and dance studios. Dance styles include the Lindy, Shim Sham and Tranky Doo. Petrohouse Tower- caffe molinari, 5 Le Duan, D1

Vietnam Cookery Centre 🍴 Oi's

Pick

A complete cookery center offering hands-on classes. This culinary compound introduces visitors to Vietnamese cuisine.

26 Ly Tu Trong, 4th floor, Ste 45, D1

VLS Vietnamese Language School

Imparting genuine fluency in Vietnamese since 1994, VLS is one of the city's best-organized and most professional training centers devoted to the Vietnamese language, with classes for all levels.

4th floor, CMARD2 Building, 45 Dinh Tien Hoang, D1

sports

FirstBIKE Vietnam

FirstBIKE balance bikes for 2-5 year olds eliminate the need for training wheels or stabilizers, and support proper balance development.

www.firstBIKE.com.vn

Great World Pool

Popular public pool known for its high standard of cleanliness, this indoor pool is shallow at both ends and deep in the middle to ensure safety for non-swimmers.

600 Nguyen Pham Tuan, D6

Ky Dong Swimming Pool

Great D3 outdoor family pool, ideal for the kids.

40 Ky Dong, D3

Lam Son Swimming Club

Olympic-sized swimming pool with designated lanes (one exclusively for women) and a reputation for cleanliness.

242 Tran Binh Trong, D5

Lan Anh Swimming Club Pool

There are various areas with different depths from 1.4m to 2m, suitable for adults. Swimming lessons are available at the club.

291 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D3

The Bike Shop

The shop is a full service shop serving the local cycling community. They offer a huge selection of kids, BMX, urban, mountain & road bikes for all levels of cyclists. Brands include: Trek, Canondale, GT, Jett, Elite & J. Wolf Custom bikes. They also stock a wide range of accessories and components from leading manufacturers, with a top-notch service center and performs world class bio-mechanical bike fittings.

Hours: Tue-Fri 12-8, Sat-Sun 9-6, Closed Monday.

250 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

3744 6405

facebook.com/thebikeshopVN

Van Thanh Pool

A very casual swimming venue favored by younger people and recreational swimmers.

48/10 Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

Yet Kieu Swimming Pool

A long-standing swimming club that's become the standard for competition, clean water, and inexpensive prices. Yet Kieu is a well-managed complex of pools for the family - and it also has its own gym.

1 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1



SUMMER FLING DRESSES







MỠ
NỮ
CƠM
DƯC
BỘ
C
5
Đ



PRODUCER: HOANG DAO
MODEL: MOVIE STAR VAN THANH
MAKE UP & HAIR: DUY LEE - 093 9281566
PHOTOGRAPER: DUY ENGLAND
COSTUMES: VAN THANH



MY LIFE AS... a wedding planner

INTERVIEWED BY **NGUYEN THUY TRANG, LENA TRAN,**
MAYA WEIR, VU THU HIEN IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

EVEN THOUGH I'VE already planned so many weddings, it's only now that I'm starting to think about my own wedding. Being a wedding planner is quite stressful; it's a happy day for the people having the wedding, but such a busy day for us. I can't wait for it to be my day to experience the happiness and not be stressed about the details!

My name is Hai. I'm turning 25 this year. I'm in charge of event planning and organizing, mainly weddings at VCCI Expo (an exhibition center belonging to the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry). The way I chose this job is pretty random. When people ask, I usually tell them, "I didn't find it, it found me." But thanks to this job, I get to have parties every day without paying a single cent.

Anyway, if you want to have an idea of the kind of pressure I face as a

wedding planner, you're going to have to understand all the tasks I'm in charge of every day. These days I manage a staff of 120 from various departments. I arrive at the office at 8 in the morning, and the first thing I do is check the work schedule on the notice board. Then at 8:30, I have a meeting with all the personnel to divide up everything that needs to be done that day. At the end of the meeting, I go back to my office and make a list of my own tasks. At 10am, I visit the wedding location to see how preparations are proceeding. This includes checking the list of all the equipment we need for the ceremony and contacting the caterers. By around 10:30, the staff begins arranging the tables and chairs and decorating the entrance gates and the main stage. Then I have to run around a lot to check up on their progress and remind people of any

special details.

As you can see, even just the morning is already stressful in my field of work. But then again, there are some days that are more stressful than others. It really depends on how many weddings we're setting up that day. On average, I'm usually in charge of managing two weddings per day. But during the high season, we may have to organize as many as six weddings in one day. And if it's a 'lucky' year, the demand can be even higher because people believe holding weddings in those years will bring them good fortune and happiness.

There's Money in Marriages

The wedding industry is very profitable. Let me break it down for you; right now we have three large banquet halls where we can hold weddings simultaneously. The



You have to deal with a whole range of situations as quickly and effectively as possible. If you don't, you can have real problems. I remember one time when one of our employees beat up the stage supervisor for something he'd done. You see, with all the work they have to do and the short amount of time they've got to do it in, people can get frustrated easily. If you don't know how to deal with people and their craziness, you won't be able to get anything done. Aside from the ability to deal with people's craziness, my other key skills are organizing, planning, and delegating. It's still hard to get training in these sorts of skills in Vietnam, so mainly I had to gain them myself through experience.

Have there been any big changes since I've been working as a wedding planner? The only one I can think of is the banning of firecrackers. It's kind of funny because people immediately adapted by switching to popping balloons on stage instead. I guess they figured it would create the same air of excitement. When we first started doing it, it was pretty basic, we had two kids holding sticks with nails attached to them and they'd poke each balloon individually to make them pop. Now though, we're very high tech, we just pull a string and all the balloons pass over nails attached to the stage. Boom! Boom! Boom!

I remember this one time when three weddings were being held at the same time. The problem was that the walls between the banquet halls weren't soundproofed very well. Normally, the start time of each wedding is slightly different. But that day, all three started at the same time and all three had similar scripts. So you had Western music playing on one side, old Vietnamese music on the other, and karaoke on another, all at the same time. And when the brides were about to be introduced we could hear from all three halls, "Please give a big round of applause to welcome the most beautiful woman of the day." All of us staff standing outside couldn't stop laughing.

I've planned weddings for a lot of my close friends. Those weddings are my favorite because even though there's still stress, it feels more rewarding. But you know, after having planned so many weddings here in the big city, I still prefer weddings in the countryside to be honest. Even though the planning isn't as professional and maybe the food isn't as sanitary, the atmosphere there is always more genuine and full of excitement. Here in Hanoi people come in quickly and leave quickly. But honestly, that's just my opinion. At the end of the day, if the couple is happy, we're happy too.

*Additional editing by Gerard Sasges. Excerpted from **It's a Living: Work and Life in Vietnam Today**, available in paperback on Amazon or as an e-book on iTunes (scan code).* ■



cost of renting a banquet hall is anywhere between VND15 and VND25 million, depending on the time of the year and how hard the couple bargains. Then, on average, each couple will order 100 food trays, but we can serve up to a maximum of 600 food trays per hall. A tray for ten people ranges from VND1.2 to 1.5 million. Of course, the price will be higher if the customers have any special requests. Because each wedding takes place in a relatively short time, only about one to two hours, there aren't many expensive activities for each wedding besides the food and music. The customers can request us to hire singers or if they want to sing themselves, we'll prepare a band or emcee for them. The truth is we make a pretty serious profit from each wedding.

To be able to do this job well it's really important to be good at improvising.

"It's really important to be good at improvising. You have to deal with a whole range of situations as quickly and effectively as possible. If you don't, you can have real problems"

Best in Show

Results from the first Vietnamese Equestrian Grand Prix

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES PROVIDED BY **BACH MA EQUESTRIAN FARM**



ON THE OUTSKIRTS of Saigon in Binh Duong, the first Vietnamese Equestrian Grand Prix debuted last month with little fanfare to an audience of approximately 200 guests. No tickets were sold. All guests were strictly by invitation only. No jubilant announcements on Vietnamese mainstream media. No catchy titles splashed across printed pages and no camera crews and no TV coverage. Despite being a self-proclaimed international standard grand prix, complete with Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) judges flown in from Hong Kong and the Philippines and a dedicated Parcours designer, the event was a small and quiet affair. In fact, it may be more appropriate to call it a community gathering than a grand prix.

Despite this, neither the guests nor the

contestants seemed to mind. Many even felt this was the best way to approach it.

“In other countries where people are already used to and love horses and horse riding, like Germany for example, an equestrian grand prix can garner audiences in the thousands,” says Johnny Mak, one of the presiding FEI judges. “I don’t know much about Vietnam, but in a country where horses are, for all intents and purposes, still treated and listed as beasts of burden, do you think a sport whose core is the bond between the rider and the horse would ever be a mainstream thing?”

“To be honest, we prefer it like this. It feels private and familiar. It feels like a community. It’s a place where we can share our passion for the sport with other lovers of equestrianism. We understand that not everyone is as crazy for horses

as we are so it’s great to have a place where we can be horse crazy all we want without hindering other people. We may not be ‘grand’ in size... yet... but we are grand in heart,” he adds.

A Partnership

So what exactly is equestrianism?

According to Vittorio, the second FEI judge from the Philippines, equestrianism is, in essence, the partnership between rider and horse. “Mr. Google probably does a better job at explaining what it is than I do. But if you want a more personal take on what it is, then that’s mine. Equestrianism can be understood as the composite of various horse riding skills such as jumping or dressage, but it is also more than that.

“It takes anything from five to ten years



of constant and dedicated training to become truly proficient. Riders spend only half of that time on horseback, however. The other half is spent on familiarizing yourself with the horse, feeding it, washing it, talking to it, taking care of it, until the point where trust starts to develop from sheer familiarity," Vittorio explains. "The horse is your partner. It's not a machine or a bike that you can push buttons and steer in the right direction. If he doesn't like you, he's not about to let you boss him around or even sit on his back, which is why a lot of new riders often find themselves on the ground. There has to be communication between the rider and horse. There has to be a partnership, and partnership doesn't grow out of thin air. True partnership requires time, commitment and dedication."

The contest itself is comprised of three categories: show jumping, dressage (also called "horse ballet"), and freeform riding.

The end of the two-day contest saw the crowning of the show jumping and dressage champion, who, amazingly, was not only the same person but also a young 14-year-old Vietnamese girl. Over the course of two days, Ngo Hong Ngoc and her equine partner Bakun beat out six other competitors for the trophies.

"I'm overwhelmed," says Ngoc on receiving her two trophies. "I put in a lot of hard work and so did Bakun. It's Bakun who I have to thank." Bakun is one among the 28 horses kept and cared for by the Bach Ma Equestrian Farm, also the host of the contest. They have known each other for only six months.

"Bakun is a very calm, very gentle

horse," Ngoc explains. "I think he trains me as much as I train him. Horse riding can be very nerve-wracking at times, so having a partner who is always calm really helps. In the end, just like with other riders and horses, it's our bond that pulls us through to the finish line."

The farm owner says: "We are overwhelmed with the feedback we have received. Two British trainers even offered to train our horses and riders for free in appreciation for our enthusiasm. This first grand prix may be small but because we did everything properly, it is legitimate and recognized by FEI certified judges. This is but the first milestone for us. Eventually, we will have a second grand prix, then a third, and then we will introduce equestrianism to more and more people in Vietnam." ■

>> The List Education

education

SCHOOLS [CHILDREN]

ABC International School

Providing a caring and nurturing atmosphere for all its students, the ABC International School offers a combination of both British and international educations and qualifications.

Saigon South Campus 1 (Primary & Secondary)

#2, 1E Street, Khu Dan Cu Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh
5431 1833 / 34/35/36
abcintschoolss@vnn.vn
www.theabcis.com

Australian International School (AIS)

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

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
190 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
Thao Dien Campus (Kindergarten & Primary School)
APSC Compound
36 Thao Dien, D2

Thu Thiem Campus (Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)
East-West Highway, D2
3742 4040
www.aisvietnam.com



British International School (BIS)



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

An Phu Primary Campus
225 Nguyen Van Huong Street, D2
3744 4551
apprimary@bisvietnam.com
An Phu Secondary Campus
246 Nguyen Van Huong Street, D2
3744 2335
apsecondary@bisvietnam.com
Tu Xuong Primary Campus
43-45 Tu Xuong Street, D3
3932 0210
txprimary@bisvietnam.com
www.bisvietnam.com

Horizon International Bilingual School

A bilingual school, HIBS opened in 2005 and applies 100 percent of

the Vietnamese national curriculum, MOET, as well as providing students with an intensive English program along with teaching science and math in English.

6 - 6A - 8, 44 Street, D2
hibsvietnam.com



European International School HCMC



The European International School Ho Chi Minh City (EIS) offers a supportive and challenging academic education from Early Years to Grade 12 (K-12) an. EIS promotes inter-cultural understanding and respect, not as an alternative to a sense of national identity, but as an essential part of life in the 21st century. Its motto is "Educating Global Citizens".

Thao Dien Campus
730 F-G-K Le Van Mien Street
Thao Dien, D2
www.eishcmc.com



Kids Club Saigon

Early childhood centers in Phu My Hung offering creative play-based programs for children ages 2 to 5. Known for unique facilities, experienced staff, high-quality learning resources, and small class sizes

79/7 Pham Thai Buong, D7
27/3 Ha Huy Tap, D7
5412 5944
www.kidsclubsaigon.com

L'atelier

Classes include spelling and grammar tuition after school, monitoring for the French education program, preparing for official tests (DEFL, DAFL, TFL, IB), and Vietnamese lessons, including extra-curricular activities during the holidays.

33/19 Quoc Huong, D2
3744 6844
www.latelier-anphu.com

Montessori International School of Vietnam

The school seeks to enable all its pupils to achieve their fullest potential by providing them with a nurturing and stimulating environment, and by being sensitive and responsive to their individual needs. Their curriculum is designed based on Montessori methodology and practice, and is enhanced with a variety of programs.

42/1 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3744 2639
www.montessori.edu.vn

Noah's Club

Providing high quality care & education for kids aged 1-6 in District 2. Various creative & fun programs, beautiful outdoor space with a warm family feeling and more.

No3, Duong so 4, Nguyen U Di, D2
3744 4709
noahandmum@yahoo.com.vn



Renaissance International School Saigon



Renaissance is an International British school providing an inclusive curriculum based upon the British curriculum complemented by the International Primary Curriculum and International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each student is offered an education tailored to meet his or her individual learning needs. It is a family school providing a stimulating and secure learning environment with first-class facilities including a 350-seat theatre, swimming pool, mini-pool, play-areas, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.

74 Nguyen Thi Thap, D7
3773 3171 ext 120/121/122
www.renaissance.edu.vn



Saigon South International School

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

78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5413 0901
www.ssis.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

The most established school in Ho Chi Minh City is celebrating 20 years of success in 2013. ISHCMC is the only school in HCMC with full accreditation to teach all three IB programs to students from 2 to 18. ISHCMC is fully accredited by both the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of School and Colleges (NEASC), two of the most prestigious international accreditation organisations. ISHCMC has 975 students from over 50 different nationalities enjoying recently upgraded facilities.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
www.ishcmc.com



Saigon Star International School



Saigon Star is a student focused international primary school offering high quality first class provision. Specializing in the British National Curriculum, all of the class teachers hold international teaching qualification. In the early years program, a Montessori specialist works closely with the main class teachers to ensure a high rate of progress. The school also provides specialists for children requiring extra support with ESL.

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



Vstar School

Vstar School provides education from Grades 1-12 in a spacious 30,000m2 environment including a sports field and swimming pool.

Him Lam Residential Complex, Nguyen Huu Tho, D7

Smartkids

An international childcare centre provides kindergarten and pre-school education for children between 18 months and six years old. A fun and friendly environment, the school focuses on learning through play.

1172 Thao Dien Compound, D2
3744 6076
www.smartkidsinfo.com

SCHOOLS [ADULT]

Cetana PSB Intellis International College

PSB College offers a suite of internationally-recognized diploma programs from business, marketing, hospitality to finance.

144-146-148 Le Lai, D1
www.psbcollege.edu.vn

RMIT International University Vietnam

RMIT Vietnam offers programs from business and management to design and micro engineering.

702 Nguyen Van Linh, D7

Universal English Center

UEC was founded in 2009. Now with 600 students drawn from 17 different nationalities, the class is served by over 35 native English speaking teachers who are committed to providing a culturally diverse and engaging classroom atmosphere. The center offers a wide range of classes from beginner levels through IGCSE, SAT, IELTS, TOEFL. UEC also provides support to students aspiring for a place in international schools.

R4-55-56-57 Hung Gia 5, D7
3412 3300
www.uec.edu.vn

VLS Vietnamese Language School

Imparting genuine fluency in Vietnamese since 1994, VLS is one of the city's best-organised and most professional training centers devoted to the Vietnamese language, with classes for all levels.

R4 - 28 Hung Phuoc 2, Le Van Thiem, D7
3602 6694

Health & Beauty

Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

Ladieswear

Anupa Eco Boutique O's Pick

The boutique has been converted into an eco-boutique which houses the complete Anupa leather collections and semi precious jewelry as well as up-and-coming eco designers both locally and internationally such as ready to wear mens linen shirts, ladies cotton dresses, chicken leg watch straps, bamboo glasses and scarves with pendants.

9 Dong Du, D1
www.anupa.net / facebook: anupaluxury

Axara Paris - Saigon Center

Axara may have seduced the whole world, but its 2010 launch in Vietnam at the Vincom Centre is still making headway with modern young Vietnamese women entranced by its romantic, glamorous designs.

65 Le Loi, D1
3914 7655

Banana Shop

Banana Shop provides everything a girl needs to be noticed in Ho Chi Minh City. Whether it be undergarments, shoes, bags, or jewelry, Banana Shop delivers with unique products from Hong Kong and the United States.

128 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3829 0061

Bebe

The shop sells its brand of women's clothing and apparel, dresses, jumpsuits, shoes and bags.

1st floor, Saigon center, 65 Le Loi, D1
3914 4011

Cao Vinh Fashion

Specializes in formal Western-style shirts, Cao Vinh is distinctive if for nothing else than its simple, intriguing website allowing customers to specify design elements.

69 Pasteur, D1
3824 5645
090 817 9129

Cashew

Fashion shop chain with 4 boutiques in HCMC. Specializes in women clothes and accessories. Designed by their own designers. Familiar brand in HCMC catwalk and Vietnam fashion industry.

38 Ly Tu Trong, D1
6683 9669

Diva Silk Boutique

Diva is all about silk, oriental glamour, luxury, and a feminine charm to match. The products in this little shop comprise both locally-woven first-grade silk garments and those imported from Thailand.

146 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 7153

Esprit

Hong Kong-based lifestyle apparel brand offering affordable casual streetwear from a two-story shop in the heart of downtown HCMC.

58 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 6085

Eva Gopa

Office fashion, street-style fashion, and evening dresses for women.

11E Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3910 3877

Fit

Caters to women in their 20s.
44 Luu Van Lang, D1

Gaya

A high-end shop that sells cocktail and party dresses by French-Cambodian designer Romyda Keth. Gaya has specializes in home interior products.

1 Nguyen Van Trang, D1
3925 1495

Kelly Bui

Launched in April 2010, the shop sells the most recent collections by the brand. The collections shown on the website are the same as those in-store.

BI-24, Vincom Center, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3936 9386

Khai Silk

Khai Silk is a favorite among local celebrities for its high quality tailoring, fabrics and service.

81 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 2856

Kiwi Fashion

Kiwi offers contemporary designs at an affordable price. It was founded by former Vietnamese model Kim Hong Phung and houses the latest fashion trends exclusively designed by Josphine Geralda, one of the leading designers in London.

74C-74/1 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 8214
3822 1191

La Bella

A Vietnamese fashion shop that carries dresses, skirts, tops and a large selection of bags and purses.

58-87 Pasteur, D1
3823 0172
9am - 9pm

Lyn Around

This is the Saigon branch of the international high-class fashion label Lyn Around. It is famous for its girly girl and street style.

1st Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
3821 6575

L'Usine

The central retail space offers famous fashion brands from around the world with full rotating stock.

First Floor, 151 Dong Khoi, D1
6674 3565

Maison de Bunga

Maison de Bunga is a specialty women's clothing store specializing in designers with floral motifs, hats, bags, and other accessories.

81 Pasteur, D1
3943 0990

Mango

Mango is a Spanish fashion design company with over 2,000 stores around the world. Ho Chi Minh City is home to several of its branches. Mango sells fashion clothing for women including dresses, skirts, tops and accessories.

Unit 2F-11, 2nd floor, Icon 68, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
6266 2111

1st Floor, 65 Le Loi, D1
3914 7464

Misa Collection

Well-known for tailoring bespoke ad dias.

67 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4007
098 330 0469

Ngan Private Collection

A collection of multi-brand fashion labels created by one of Vietnam's highly recognized fashion designers. Dedicated personal styling consultant available for those in need of their own stylist.

23 Ly Tu Trong, D1
6290 9391

Phuong My

A ready-to-wear fashion designer currently working from Ho Chi Minh City, producing feminine pieces using high quality fabric such as silk organza and lace using expert tailoring and construction which has earned her frequent coverage in the country's top fashion magazines.

81 Le Thanh Ton, D1
09 7271 7788

Shin

Vintage style ladies fashion, clothes and accessories by local designers.

122 Ly Tu Trong, D1
090 935 2369

Sifa Fashion

Known for selling office wear for women.

192 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3825 0618

Song - Valerie Gregori McKenzie

French bohemian chic designs that caters to sophisticated women.

75 Pasteur, D1
3824 6986

Sophilita

A simple Italian fashion brand with several branches in Vietnam, Sophilita mainly sells office, street, and casual, womenswear.

15C Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
6275 9019

Suite Blanco

Suite Blanco is a Spanish company specialized in the design, production, distribution and sale of all types of accessories and clothing for the modern woman and man looking for the latest trends at affordable prices. The chain now has 240 shops spread in 15 different countries including Vietnam.

Vincom Center A, 171 Dong Khoi, D1

Thuy Design House

A popular Vietnamese ready-to-wear designer creating seasonal collections using high quality materials with a minimalist design aesthetic. Thuy's friendly boutique carries a range of shapes and silhouettes that are often worn by the city's fashion conscious.

151/6 Dong Khoi, D1
www.facebook.com/thuydesignhouse

Umbrella

This fashion label caters to a higher end market with tailored bags to accessories.

35 Ly Tu Trong, D1
6276 2730
www.umbrella-fashion.com

Valenciani O's Pick

Highly respected Vietnamese designer whose collections are featured in ELLE Vietnam and Vogue Vietnam.

1F/12 Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
3821 2788
090 785 5788

Menswear

Anna Vo Fashion Boutique

A popular designer currently in Saigon, Anna Vo produces seasonal collections inspired by her time in Europe and Vietnam as well as aiming to be both beautiful and functional. The boutique also carries pieces from her mother Thuy Nga's collections as well as high quality imported accessories. Each collection includes both menswear and womenswear.

23 Dong Khoi, D1
6675 4013

An Phuoc

An Phuoc Garment Manufacturing was established in 1992 with 50 workers and 40 sewing machines, specializing in manufacturing for exporting enterprises. Now it has transformed itself into a garment export company featuring handmade clothing and shoes.

182 Hai Ba Trung, D1

Bonjour

A fashion boutique at the Vo Van Tan/ Cao Thang T-intersection providing an exhaustive range of one-off fashion pieces and accessories with both a modern and vintage feel. Prices are affordable for both men and women and come in a range of sizes to suit most customers.

446 Vo Van Tan, D3

Massimo Ferrari Boutique

Italiana - Americana fusion brand of impeccable quality and style. Collections are available as ready-to-wear and/or made-to-order. Sizes from 39 - 47 D and E widths available. Run by an Italian Spanish American himself, master tailor Luis Antonio Torres fits and consults all of his customers himself. Suits are the best fit and quality in Vietnam. All shirts, suits and trousers are fully bench made and the fabric selections are to die for. If you're hunting for briefcases, wallets, and accessories look no further. Massimo Ferrari carries all types of bags and accessories for the man and the lady. Brands carried are Maison Takuya and Orobianco from Italy. Luxury quality and designs are simply gorgeous.

42A1 Tran Quoc Thao, D3
www.massimoferrarioutique.com

Maschio Shop

Colorful retro men's fashions, one of the quirkiest fine-quality local fashion stores in the central area.

168 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3829 2975

Mizada

Since its inception in 2004, Mizada has become one of the leading luxury

fashion brands in Vietnam. Mizada caters to both women and women with products such as T-shirts, jeans, coats, scarves, and much more.

105 Le Thanh Ton, D1
6673 4199

San Sciario Manhattan

Fashionable, smart menswear from the Viet Tien Garment Company, specializing in garment manufacture and trade equipment since the mid 70's.

1st Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3864 0800
090 316 6364

Veston Huy Hoang

Men's tailored fashions, specialising in suits. Expect to Pay: \$200 and upward for a suit, fabric included. Obviously, the better the quality of fabric, the higher the price. 70% of customers are foreigners.

65 Pasteur, D1
3822 4609
090 865 4988

gyms

Ais Sports Complex

Open to the public, the center has a 25m swimming pool, basketball court and an astroturf play area. Inquire about special packages.

APSC Compound, 36 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2549
www.aisportscentre.com

Amaryska Kamionko

Private fitness trainer, assisting in full body workouts, toning & strength training for females. Sessions often at clients' homes or at their designated gyms.

0902271830
personalfitnessathome.blogspot.com

Body By Jovie

Body By Jovie is a boutique personal training center and yoga studio, catering to individuals demanding diversity, challenge and results. It specializes in one on one session and also offer a full range of classes such as yoga, TRX suspension class, belly dancing, Zumba and outdoor boot camp.

Riverside Residence, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5417 1946
info@bodybyjovie.com
7am - 9pm (Weekdays) and
7:30am - 7pm (Saturdays)

California WOW

The first and largest international fitness company to open in Vietnam. Provides world class fitness services and products in a state-of-the-art 5-star fitness and entertainment facility.

126 Hong Bang, D5
28-30-32 Le Lai, D1
5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4

Christina Eberlin Yoga Teacher

Christina graduated from Virajati 300hr yoga teacher training in Thailand. She is offering private yoga classes and group classes. For more information you can reach her at
Christinaeberlin@gmail.com
or 093 849 2461

Cyril And You

French physical instructor Cyril specializes in sports conditioning, resistance training and senior training along with designing a personal fitness program to fit your needs. **Thao Dien, D2; 094 777 1326**
www.cyril-and-you.com

Got Fit Gym

Located on the 3rd floor in the H3 Building, this international-standard, gym offers a steam bath and sauna, yoga, kickboxing, rumba, salsa, merengue, cumbia and reggaeton classes.

384 Hoang Dieu, D4
6261 6169

K1 Fitness & Fight Factory

A well-known brand name founded by a group of professional kickboxers and now present in France and Southeast Asia, including Montpellier and Phnom Penh as well as here in Saigon.

14 Duong 38, Nguyen Thi Thap, D7
091 833 7111

Nicky's Zumba® Fitness Studio

They offer Zumba®Fitness, Yoga, Cross Fit, Pilates Personal Fitness, Nutrition Advice and Hip hop kids, Aerobic kids, ZumbaAtomic®.

Available at: Panorama-Fitness (206 Tran Van Tra, D7), Fit & Fun Club (Sky Garden 2, D7), Cyril&you (49a Xa Lo Ha Noi, D2), and Sommerset (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1).
093 406 0735 or 6680 7226
zumba.nutrition@gmail.com
www.zumba-saigon.com

Nutrifort Fitness

Aiming to be the voice of health and fitness in Vietnam, Nutrifort provides clientele with proper tools and teaching methods to keep the mind and body fit and healthy. Clients also learn about nutrition to nourish and maintain their health.

2B1 Chu Manh Trinh, D1

Rex Health Club

This spa was designed for both men & women, integrating traditional Vietnamese, Indian, and Chinese herbal remedies and techniques. Situated on the rooftop of the Rex Hotel, it features two outdoor swimming areas.

141 Nguyen Hue, D1

Saigon River Club

Located in Ruby Tower at the Saigon Pearl, Saigon River Club is equipped with the very latest in fitness technology. It has a fully-equipped sauna and steam room and a large outdoor pool with jacuzzi.

Ruby Tower, 92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 9009

Star Fitness Bitexco

Located in The Manor Tower, this gym is not only a fitness center it includes other specialized classes such as yoga, belly dancing, kick boxing, zumba, body toning, and so on.

Level 1, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 0255

Spa InterContinental & Healthclub

Guests will have access to a 20-meter outdoor lap pool complete with a sundeck, a 160-square meter spacious fitness centre with the latest generation cardio and resistance equipment, plus a personal program of fitness classes.

3rd Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
spa@icasianasaigon.com
8am - 9:30pm

Thien Nga (Swan) Club

Fitness club that has training equipment and a 25sqm swimming pool

751 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0012

The Health Club

The Landmark Health Club is located on

the 15th and 16th floors of The Landmark serviced apartments, and offers a fully equipped gym, rooftop swimming pool, and a squash court. It also features male and female changing facilities and saunas.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 2098
hc@thelandmarkvietnam.com

The Crescent Wellness Club

Overlooking The Crescent complex's lagoon, this multi-purpose and organically designed fitness and wellness centre offers an array of modern facilities including a state-of-the-art gym, group fitness classes, yoga sessions, a squash court, swimming pool, steam bath and nutrition bar.

3rd Floor, Crescent Plaza, 105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 1277

X-Rock Climbing

With two locations in the city, this wall in An Phu stands at 26 meters. The center offers nine levels from beginners to hardcore.

503A Nguyen Duy Trinh, D2
www.xrockclimbing.com

Yoga Club

Yogo fitness center for both men and women

18 Street Number 2, D2
3897 6786

clinics

American Chiropractic Clinic

American Chiropractic Clinic is a chiropractic, physiotherapy, and foot care clinic in the Heart of Saigon. We are staffed by American and French-trained Chiropractic Physicians and Vietnamese Physical Therapists.

161-161A Hai Ba Trung, D3
3939 3930
www.acc.vn

Animal Rescue & Care

Abandoned and wild cats and dogs can be adopted or fostered from their online database. ARC also organizes several animal welfare education and low-cost spaying campaigns.

31-44 Thao Dien, D2
www.arcpets.com

An Phu International Clinic

An international standard clinic with a full range of specialist and modern medical equipment with a dedicated team of professors, doctors, experienced nurses.

251A Luong Dinh Cua, D2
6660 6602
www.dakhoanphu.com

Family Medical Practice

With a nationwide operational advantage, they provide international standard medical services in a safe, professional and welcoming environment.

95 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2000
www.vietnammedicalpractice.com
hcmc@vietnammedicalpractice.com
8am-6pm Monday-Friday, 8am-2pm Saturday

Australian Clinic & Pathology Diagnostics

The Australian Clinic, Pathology & Diagnostics (ACPD) is comprised of a medical outpatient clinic and associated pathology laboratory. The clinic hosts highly trained and experienced medical specialists.

273 - 275 Ly Thai To, D10
3834 9941

Center Medical International

Center Medical International is an outpatient clinic fully-equipped to provide international standard comprehensive and specialized medical services. All physicians are either French or Vietnamese.

1 Han Thuyen, D1
3827 2365

Columbia Asia Saigon Clinic

Beautiful international clinic a short distance from the cathedral, with exemplary standards of healthcare for walk-in patients.

8 Alexandre De Rhodes, D1
3823 8454

David Shepherd Chiropractic Clinic

DSCC provides Chiropractic care for patients using state of the art physiotherapy equipment imported from USA. DSCC is managed and operated by American doctors who use modern and advanced technologies techniques to ensure safe, gentle, and effective treatment.

41 Noi Khu, Hung Gia 3, D7
5410 6242
www.saigonchiropractic.com

Diag Center International

Situated in Ho Chi Minh City, Diag Center International is a diagnostic testing center, which consists of a team of thirty Vietnamese staff, and operates under French medical biologists and assisted by a group of Vietnamese medical technicians trained in France.

146 An Binh, D5
3838 1551

Family Medical Practice

With a nationwide operational advantage, they provide international standard medical services in a safe, professional and welcoming environment.

95 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2000
www.vietnammedicalpractice.com
hcmc@vietnammedicalpractice.com
8am-6pm Monday-Friday, 8am-2pm Saturday

Hanh Phuc International Women & Children's Hospital

Hanh Phuc International Hospital aims to be the leading private healthcare provider for women and children in Vietnam. Designed and managed up to Singaporean standards, the 260-bed Hanh Phuc Hospital aims to provide a comprehensive range of quality healthcare services to women and children with a personalized touch and in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

2nd floor Saigon Trade Centre, 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 1860

Institute of Traditional Medicine

Established in 1975, the Institute of Traditional Medicine is a holistic research and teaching hospital. Patients are treated using traditional medicines, some of which are produced by the institute itself. Some doctors speak English and/or French, and acupuncture lessons are on offer.

273-275 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan
3844 5954

Lotus Clinic

Lotus Clinic was established in 2007 as the first Japanese medical clinic in Ho Chi Minh City.

Lancaster Bldg , 22 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3827 0000

International SOS Medical Care

Located in the city center, the clinic is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing routine and emergency

healthcare services as well as on-site laboratory and radiology services. Languages spoken include Japanese, Korean and French, among others.
167A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3829 8551

Perfect Skin lab

More than just a spa, this District 1 venue is a genuine skin lab that caters to each customer's unique characteristics and needs. The lab is the latest concept developed by Dermal Essentials, the elite distributor for Dermalogica, a skin care system researched and developed by The International Dermal Institute in Vietnam.
1st floor, unit 9-10 Saigon Center,
65 Le Loi, D1
3910 0372

Stamford Skin Center

The Stamford Skin Centre has grown to include qualified specialists who treat general diseases of the skin such as acne, eczema and other forms of dermatitis, rosacea, psoriasis, and skin cancers.
254 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3932 1090
090 845 3338

Uc Chau Cosmetic Surgery

This central clinic performs straightforward cosmetic treatments, including enhancing the nose bridge, breast enlargement, eyelid folds, and wrinkle removal.
25 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
2212 3396
2212 3398

Victoria Health Care International Clinic

Victoria Healthcare offers the highest standard of healthcare, based on American and European practices, and offering compassionate and efficient service with the greatest respect for the patient.
79 Dien Bien Phu, D1

Vietnam Family Medical Practice

International clinic located in the Manor complex, within easy reach of high-rollers living around the Saigon Pearl area. The sister clinic is located beneath Diamond Plaza.
Ground Floor, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 0758

dental

2000 Dental Clinic Trung Tam Implant

Established in 1999, 2000 Dental Clinic now has 65 dentists serving 3 locations offering the full range of dental care, including surgery, implants and extractions.
125 Le Thi Rieng, D1
3925 6501

Dang Luu Dental Centre

Dang Luu Dental Centre offers the full range of dental services, including implants, crown and bridges and teeth whitening. Orthodontic services are also provided. Some of the dentists have been foreign-trained.
34 Phan Dang Luu, Binh Thanh

Digital Dental Clinic

Digital Dental Care draws on well-known Korean consistency in service standards and precision equipment to offer a truly world-class service in the Phu My Hung area.
R4-35 Ton Dat Tien, D7

Elite Dental

With an atmosphere more reminiscent of a luxury hotel, this is one of the largest high-quality dental clinics in HCMC, established to answer expat demands for superb dental techniques and professional staff.

57A Tran Quoc Thao, D3
3933 3737

European Dental Clinic

Offering state of the art technology, competitive pricing, and supreme quality, this dentistry is truly dedicated to their patients.
17-17A Le Van Mien, D2
091 874 9204 or 090 955 1916
www.europeandentalclinic-asia.com

German International Dentistry

German International Dentistry offers excellent consultation services from experienced, international dentists so that you can make informed decisions about your dental care.
1489 Nguyen Van Linh, D7
3776 3777

Grand Dentistry

Grand Dentistry is an upscale dental office located in the ground floor of Sunwah tower on Nguyen Hue street. It is noted for being very tourist/expat friendly. This dentistry features English speaking staff and expatriate dentists.
Ground Floor Sun Wah Tower,
115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9446

Minh Khai Dental Clinic

French/American/Swiss managed clinic with well-maintained international-standard equipment.
199 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Nguyen Cu Trinh, D1
3925 3399

Naomi Dental Clinic

A full service dental clinic under the direction of Japanese dentist Dr. Nakashima Miho.
R4-45 Hung Phuoc 4, D7
5410 3937

Saigon Smile

With a group of experienced doctors and professional staff trained to do teeth cleaning, dental work and other teeth enhancing procedures.
96 Tran Nao, D2
6674 4255
8am to 8pm

Saint Paul

Saint Paul has facilities all over Ho Chi Minh City, and with the slogan "slight, exact, and painless," the doctors at Saint Paul aim to please even the most fastidious patients.
50 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3835 6159

Smile Dental Center

Quality dental care with whitening, cleaning, and orthodontic services. Japanese equipment and techniques.
173 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 6635

Starlight Dental Clinic

Award-winning quality care and personal service in clean premises, offering general dentistry, whitening and cosmetic surgery, implants, orthodontics, pediatric, and preventive dentistry.
2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
3822 6222

Westcoast International Dental Clinic

Large, international team of dentists and support staff from Canada, Australia, Japan, France, Italy, Thailand, and Vietnam. The clinic regularly hosts visiting dentists from many other countries.
27 Nguyen Trung Truc, D1
3825 7485

hospitals

Cao Thang Eye Hospital

The CT International Eye Hospital is one

of the few dedicated, comprehensive eye institutes in the country. Internationally recognized staff diagnose and treat the entire spectrum of conditions of the eye, including complex problems such as diabetic retinopathy, retinal detachments, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.
135B Tran Binh Trong, D5
090 588 6086

Cho Ray Hospital

Cho Ray Hospital is the largest healthcare service in Vietnam, providing full priority service for expatriates, with a staff including 696 doctors and 1350 nurses.
201B Nguyen Chi Thanh, D5

Columbia Asia International Hospital - Gia Dinh

Skilled and experienced doctors offer exceptional medical care at affordable prices with the latest in medical technology. Patients benefit from advanced medical diagnostics, treatment and personal care.
1 No Trang Long, Binh Thanh

DialAsia International Hospital

A specialist centre in kidney treatment for the expat community, DialAsia is a fairly well-reputed international hospital of nephrology & dialysis, offering medical consultancy in renal diseases, haemodialysis, and paraclinical examinations.
253 Dien Bien Phu, D3

FV Hospital

FV Hospital is a Vietnam's only internationally accredited healthcare facility. A wholly foreign-owned general hospital offering a wide range of medical and surgical services under one roof, equipped to care for patients from consultation and diagnosis through to the completion of treatment.
6 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7

Saigon International Maternity Hospital J.S.C.

A private-owned hospital specialising in maternity, this was the first hospital to meet the Hotel-Hospital international standard in HCMC since the year 2000.
63 Bui Thi Xuan, D1

Traditional Medicine Hospital

This hospital is a major medical centre practising the essence of that millennia-old exploration into the rhythms of the human body and its connection to the natural world which firmly belongs to this region.
179 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3

Tu Du Hospital

Tu Du is a large state hospital specializing in maternity, women, and children's diseases, family planning, and many other areas. Highly experienced doctors and staff provide affordable care.
284 Cong Quynh, D1

Vu Anh International Hospital - Obstetrics

Luxurious hospital facility offering modern care in a comfortable setting. The hotel also provides 12 VIP rooms for patients seeking 5 star medical services featuring garden access and designer furniture.
15-16 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap

nails

Classic Nails

Located near Ben Thanh Market, Classic Nails is a professional salon with staff who are trained and experienced in designing complicated pattern. The salon only uses materials from reputable companies and always update with the latest colors. They also have sofas with a massage function and adjustable posture for the customer's comfortable and relaxation.
4 Phan Boi Chau, D1
3825 7047
9am - 8pm

Kelly Pang

Nail salon established in 2004 as a small nail salon in Phu Nhuan, Kelly Pang has gradually become known as a training center and professional nail care facility throughout Vietnam.
214C Nguyen Trai, D1

OPI Nail Spa Nguyen Hue

Providing a full range of official products and services of the OPI brand.
103 Nguyen Hue, D1

spas

An Nam Spa

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26-28 Dong Du, D1

Dermal Essentials

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108 Pasteur, D1

Eden Spa

Extremely central, Eden is located in a quiet niche off Nguyen Hue in the commercial center. Owing to its expertise in skincare and first-class relaxing atmosphere, Eden has the gumption to claim a number-one spot in the discerning Japanese market.
19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3815
097 810 6868



Flamingo Spa

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3822 1074
091 243 9601
FlamingoSpa.vn@gmail.com



Glw

A boutique day spa located in the heart of the city. In this relaxing, peaceful atmosphere, guests can enjoy a full range of massage/treatment options.
Kim Do Hotel, 129A Nguyen Hue, D1

Golden Lotus Foot Massage Club Sauna

Fully-featured massage establishment with pool, steam room, and hydraulic massage located in trendy Thai Van Lung. Various salt scrubs, and high-end beauty products imported direct from Korea are available.
15 Thai Van Lung, D1

HP Oxygen Spa

A safe haven from the dust and smoke of the city offering an array of body/skin treatment options, including

Business & Tech

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



Dear Hadrien,

I have been offered a contract to work as a project manager in Ho Chi Minh City and I will earn a little over USD2,000 per month. However, I heard that in Vietnam all amounts in contracts should be stated in Vietnamese dong. Is that correct? And is my future employer allowed to pay my salary in cash?



A member of the Paris Bar, **Hadrien Wolff** has been practicing law in Vietnam for more than seven years, currently as a partner of Audier & Partners based at its HCMC office. Having gained extensive legal experience in the Netherlands and Cambodia, **Marijn Sprokhereef** is an associate at the Hanoi office of the same firm. **Audier & Partners** is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues



employing organizations (whether they are resident or non-resident), and foreign employees (whether they are residents or non-resident) are permitted to reach an agreement in labor contracts on the payment of salaries, bonuses and allowances in a foreign currency. Therefore, your salary may be stated and paid in US dollars.

Circular 32 is also applicable to your second question, as it explicitly allows employees and employers to agree on paying and receiving salary, as well as bonuses and/or allowances, in cash. The foregoing complies with the Labor Code of Vietnam, which states that wages may be paid either in cash or through the personal bank account of an employee.

The newly issued Decree No. 222/2013/ND-CP on payments made by cash, which is effective from March 1, 2014, does not change anything for your specific situation. It does, however, further regulate and restrict payments in cash for a number of other transactions within the territory of Vietnam, such as securities transactions and transactions for the contribution of capital to an enterprise.

To conclude on a practical note, opening a bank account in Vietnam is usually not very complicated and there is a wide range of banks to choose from, both Vietnamese and foreign. It may be worth inquiring in advance about the documents that your preferred bank requires for opening an account with them. We wish you all the best with your new job!

If you have any legal questions you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com. ■

TO START WITH YOUR first question, you are right that the Vietnamese government has recently made an effort to restrict the use of foreign currency within Vietnam. On December 26, 2013, the State Bank of Vietnam issued further guidance on this matter in Circular No. 32/2013/TT-NHNN (or simply Circular 32).

Circular 32, which applies to both resident and non-resident organizations and individuals, makes it clear that within the territory of Vietnam all transactions, payments, listings, advertisements, quotations, price fixings,

and price recordings in contracts and agreements may not be conducted in a foreign currency. The circular provides, however, for several exceptions to this general rule. Residents, for example, are permitted to contribute capital in a foreign currency in order to implement a foreign investment project in Vietnam, whereas non-residents are permitted to record prices in contracts and to pay for the export of goods and services to residents in a foreign currency.

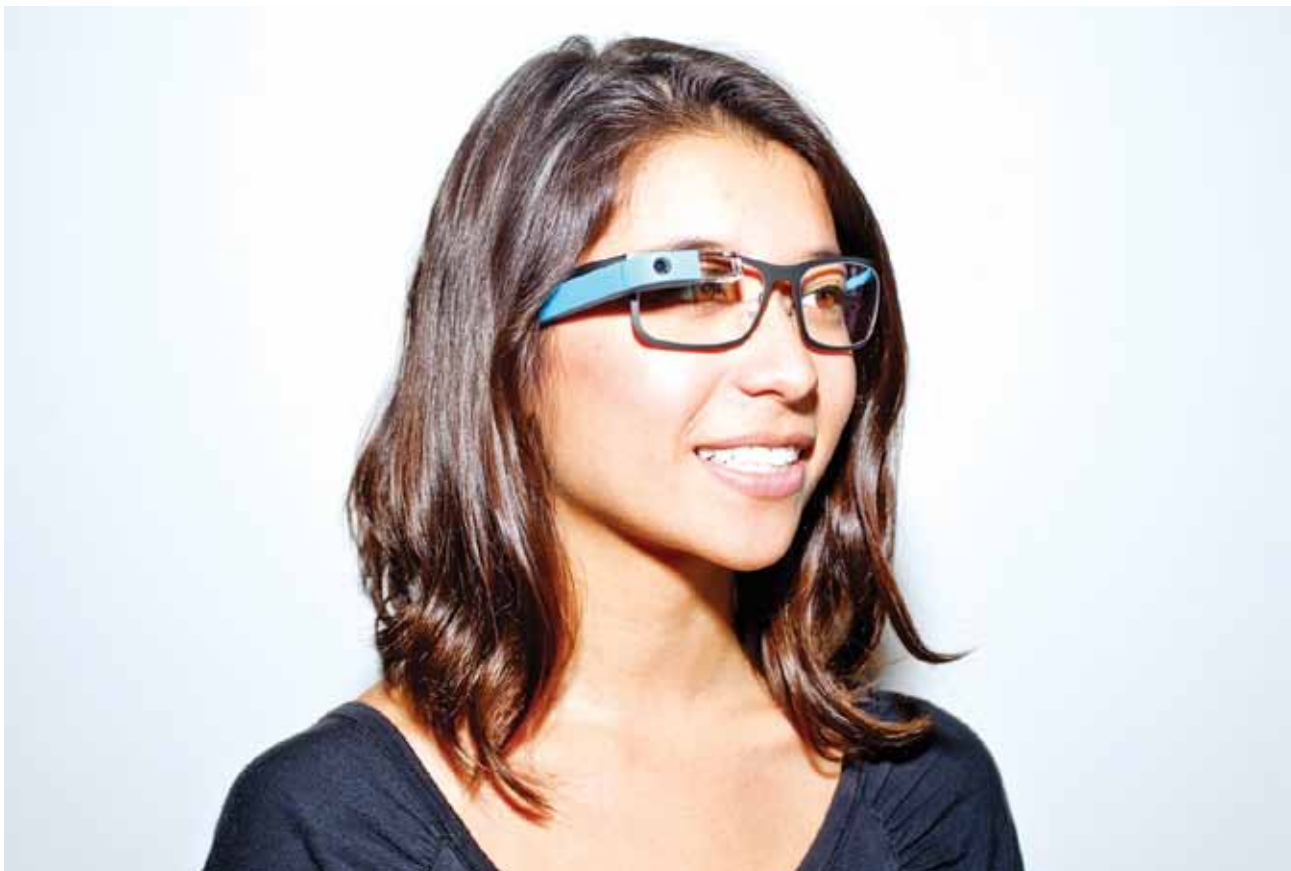
Another exception that is especially relevant to your situation is that

Classroom

Google Glass as a tool to learning English



Anh-Minh Do is the editor at TechInAsia.com for Vietnam focusing on technology startups, trends and companies. Minh also organizes events at Evecoo.vn



INNOVATION IN VIETNAM can come from the most interesting places. There's a startup with motorbike theft prevention hardware. There's one that crowd sources for tours. There's another that focuses totally on e-commerce logistics. And don't get me started on Flappy Bird. The list goes on. This week, Topica, one of Vietnam's most successful online learning platforms, is doing something a bit different with English education. The company, which was founded in 2008, already offers certification online, coordinates with colleges to offer online learning support, and also runs the Founder's Institute annual incubator program. Now it's experimenting with using Google Glass to teach students English. The program is called TopMito.

For example, Google Glass is being used to allow a teacher located at home

to coach students who go to a local coffee shop in Hanoi. The coffee shop is working in coordination with Topica because it has foreign expat waiters who can interact with the students in English, allowing them to use English in a practical way. Thus, Glass allows the student to have a real-life conversation with a foreigner working at the coffee shop who speaks English, while also getting coaching from their teacher, who might be sitting at home.

The new experimental course with Glass started this month and so far has 30 students, while Topica already has over 1,000 English students on its education platform. Each of these students will have one live Google Glass session per week. Four other students – not counting the Glass-wearing student in the coffee shop having the lesson – will be able to stream

the session online and learn alongside the Glass-equipped student. Throughout the week, students can attend each other's sessions, which run from 8am to 10pm every day.

In the future, the course will move beyond coffee shops and follow students around supermarkets, bars, tourist spots, and any other location where they can practice conversational English. Eventually, the course may even get Vietnamese celebrities to go abroad, using Glass, and interact in English and subsequently broadcast that interaction for students to see how the celebrities are getting on and communicating effectively in another language. Pham Minh Tuan, the founder of Topica, says they only have one Glass unit right now, but they're ordering a second one. Finally, someone has a way to use Google Glass other than for dating. ■

Business & Tech

banks

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39290999
- Bank of China**
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3821 9949
- Citibank**
15/F Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
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- Commonwealth Bank**
65 Nguyen Du, D1
3824 1525
012 1861 8695
- HSBC**
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3724 7247
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18th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3827 8260
- Standard Chartered Bank**
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Thang, D1
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- Belgium Consulate**
105 Duong Van An, D2
6281 8001
9am - 11.30am on Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri
- Cambodia Consulate**
41 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 2751
Mon-Fri: 7.30am - 11.30am; 2pm - 5pm
- Consulate General of Canada**
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3827 9899
Mon-Thu: 8.30am - 4.30pm
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3910 2903
- China Consulate**
39 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3829 5009
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39 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3823 1142
ptmchn@hcm.vnn.vn
www.hochiminh.mofcom.gov.cn
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45 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 7350
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3821 9373
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- Finland Consulate**
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3827 2029
- France Consulate**
27 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3520 6819
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- Germany Consulate**
126 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3829 2455
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3829 0130
- Iceland Consulate**
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- Consulate General of India**
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3823 7050
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- Japanese Consulate**
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08 3933 3520
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3827 0555
kuwaitconsulate@gmail.com
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- Laos Consulate**
93 Pasteur, D1
3829 7667
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1pm - 4.30pm
- Malaysia Consulate**
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3829 9023
malhcmnh@kln.gov.my
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215 A-B Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan
3844 5520
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- New Zealand Consulate**
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3821 5423
www.nordcham.com

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3822 1696
norcons@hcm.fpt.vn
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consulgeneral@hcm.fpt.vn

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3820 0623

- Russia Consulate**
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- Consulate-General of The Republic of Singapore**
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3822 5174
www.mfa.gov.sg

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64-68 Hai Ba Trung, D1

- South Korea Consulate**
107 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 5757
Mon-Fri: 9am - 12pm; 1.30pm - 5pm

- Sweden Consulate**
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3823 6800
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- Switzerland Consulate**
42 Giang Van Minh, D2
3744 6996

- Thailand Consulate**
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3520 4610

- Ukraine Consulate**
22-24 Nguyen Van Thu, D1

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- IF Consulting**
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www.insuranceinvietnam.com

- Liberty Mutual Insurance**
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4th Floor Saigon Tower, 29 Le Duan, D1

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Faces & Places



Hong Kong Bound

The cocktail event at Craig Thomas Gallery was a preview of selected works by ten artists that were on their way to be displayed at the Affordable Art Fair (AAF) in Hong Kong later that month. The works comprised of the figurative and abstract, mixed media, oil and acrylic paintings, woodburn, sculpture and installation.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

Family Fun Day

Saigon Star International School hosted a fun filled day of activities. There were bouncy castles, pony rides, face painting and lots of games on the school fields. Pizza, ice cream, popcorn and candy floss were available throughout the day.

IMAGES BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG



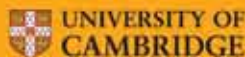
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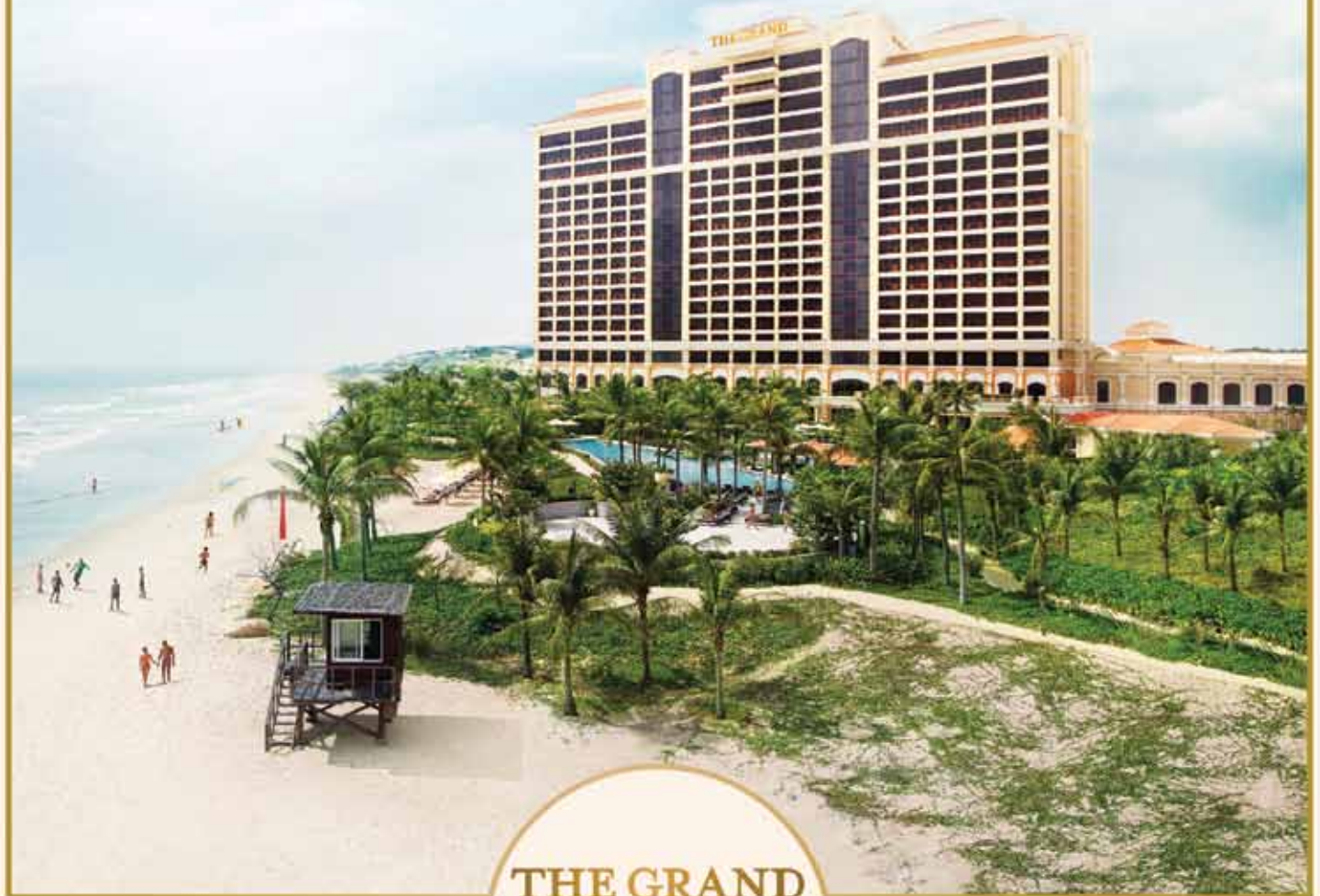


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