

game changers | thought leaders | rule breakers | style makers

COLLECTIVE ^B_U_H

ISSUE 32

WHEN IT'S
OK TO QUIT
STEPPING AWAY AS CEO

TRUTH
VS. JUSTICE
THE REAL INTENT
OF MAKING A
MURDERER

HOW TO
BOUNCE
BACK
WHEN
TRAGEDY
STRIKES

IRIS
APFEL

WILD
CHILD

WHEN DID YOU STOP BELIEVING ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE?

PHO SURE

There's more to VIETNAM than bowls of noodles and wartime history – we uncover a thriving START-UP SCENE, postcard-worthy BEACHES and even floating VILLAGES.

WORDS MEL CARSWELL

ESCAPE – TOPAS ECOLODGE, SAPA

Sleep high above it all in one of 25 mountain bungalows, 45 minutes from Sapa town. The Topas Ecolodge opened in 2005, is based on sustainable principals, employs locals and uses local produce to ensure everyone wins. Activities like hiking, mountain biking, cooking classes and campfire sessions are arranged on site, or for those lazy days, head to the hilltop spa or borrow a book from the library and watch the world pass you by from the lounge (pictured), built in a traditional Tay stilt house that was carefully moved piece by piece to Topas Ecolodge. topasecolodge.com



LUXURY – THE NAM HAI, HOI AN

For contemporary Vietnamese elegance, the best beach in Hoi An and a buffet breakfast to rival anything in Asia (French champagne included), book a villa at five-star hotel The Nam Hai. Go here for seclusion (despite only being a few minutes by car from the UNESCO township of Hoi An) as well as effortless service and comfort. Be sure to indulge at breakfast, laze in the double hammocks on the beach and let the hours pass by from the edge of the infinity pool. (Kids club gratefully onsite). ghmhotels.com/en/nam-hai



ON THE WATER – HALONG BAY

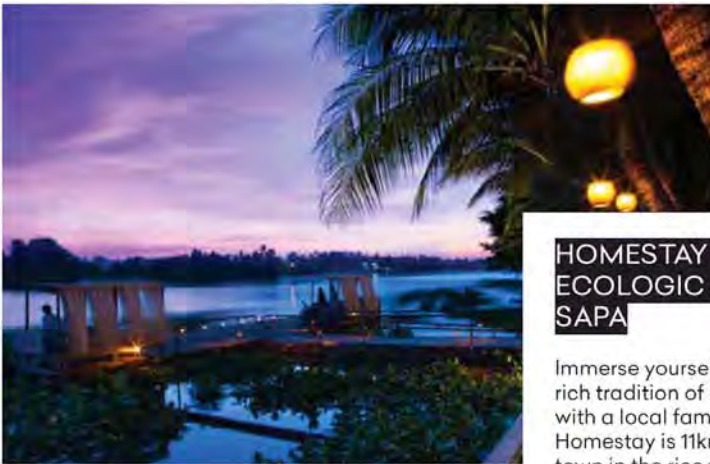
There really is no other way to explore the emerald waters, limestone islands and lush rainforests of Halong Bay than by junk boat. Jump from the bow, laze all afternoon on the stern, kayak to secluded beaches or tour floating villages and above all, feast along the way. As touristy as it can feel at times (there are reportedly over 500 operators out there), you'll never forget (or regret) waking up and realising that your first view of that day will be those towering limestone pillars of the Gulf of Tonkin (all 1600 of them). Our tip for picking the right tour and provider is simple: you really do get what you pay for here, so skimp somewhere else. #bucketlist #soulfood

STAY



ELEGANCE – THE HOTEL METROPOLE HANOI, HANOI

The city of street food is a sea of budget hotels with wonky air conditioning, but for a touch of class (and history), head to The Hotel Metropole Hanoi by the opera house and Hoan Kiem Lake. Built in 1901 by two French investors, it's a sophisticated oasis away from the chaos and heat of the streets outside, with impeccable staff ("What can we get for you today, my lady?") and many of the original features intact (definitely stay in the historic Metropole Wing if available). This spot was also the go-to for media and diplomats during the war and has a preserved 40-square-metre bomb shelter underneath which you can tour post-afternoon swim, followed by a drink at the hip Bamboo Bar (which is open to non-hotel guests as well). sofitel-legend.com



BOUTIQUE – AN LAM SAIGON RIVER, HO CHI MINH

The frenetic pace, smells and delights of the city are a wondrous affair but when your belly is full and your legs weary, retreat to An Lam Saigon River, which is about 15 minutes away by speedboat. You'll actually feel hours from it all, whisked away to a very private, small hotel with traditional architecture, 75-year-old trees, and a view over the Saigon River. All you have to do is grab a book and watch wooden junk boats pass you by. For a quiet night in, there's also a chic restaurant onsite which juts out over the river. anlam.com

HOMESTAY – TAVAN ECOLOGIC HOMESTAY, SAPA

Immerse yourself in the warmth and rich tradition of Sapa by staying with a local family. Tavan Ecologic Homestay is 11km from the main town in the rice fields of Muong Hoa Valley. There are private bungalows with locally-made furniture and 180-degree views of the mountains. The hosts happily arrange local hikes and you can also eat dinner with the whole host family. tavanecologichomestay.com



ENDLESS SPA – FUSION MAIA, DA NANG

If the biggest decision you want to make on your holiday is whether to choose the body scrub over the balancing foot ritual, head to the Fusion Maia where the concept is simple: book in and you can spend as much time in the spa as you like... at no extra charge. Guests are encouraged to book in at least two hours of treatments per day and if there aren't too many guests (like on our visit), you can actually spa all day, every day, if you want to. There's a fresh, progressive vibe to this hotel, with sweet surprises like the all-day breakfast offer of anywhere and any way you want it. maidanang.fusion-resorts.com



IMAGES COURTESY OF THE NAM HAI, PARADISE CRUISES, HOTEL METROPOLE, AN LAM, FUSION MAIA, TOPAS ECOLOGIE

TOP 8 MUST-DOS:

EXPLORE the caves, secluded beaches and floating villages of Halong Bay in the north near the Chinese border, the backstreets and merchant houses of ancient Hoi An (don't just go there for a tailored suit!) and Phong Nha-Ke Bang, the biggest and oldest karst formation in Asia.



EAT your way through every single day. Few other countries offer such across-the-board quality as Vietnam – from the smallest towns to the big cities, the food is fresh and packs a punch. See our Hanoi street food guide for a taster.



TOP FIND: YOGA OASIS IN THE HEART OF HANOI

Right in the buzz of Hanoi, you'll find a peaceful space of green smoothies, smiling staff and yoga at Zenith Yoga Studio II & Cafe. First, shoes off. Two, laze on low-lying daybeds and cushions. Three, place your coffee on upcycled pallet tables. Four, order kombucha and the mushroom sandwich. Five, soak up the air con and indulge in a bit of wi-fi. Six, head upstairs for yoga. Bliss. zenithyogavietnam.com



OBSERVE in one of the many temples. Our picks: Jade Emperor Pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City for its atmosphere (make sure you look up). It was built by the Chinese in 1909 and is full of statues and a thick loom of incense, and can entrance you for an hour or more if you have the time. Also, the Temple of Literature in Hanoi for its rich Vietnamese history – the country's first university was opened here in 1076.

MOVE sand-sled at the sand dunes of Mui Ne (either the much larger White Dunes or the photogenic Red Dunes), motorbike from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh (on a rented bike or as part of a tour) or cycle through the back roads and rice terraces of Sapa.



TREK through stunning scenery or local villages. The country has walks for every fitness and endurance level and the best are generally found in the north. First stop, Sapa for incredible access to everyday village life.

REMEMBER the cost of war. There are reminders everywhere – even on a taxi trip back to our hotel in Hanoi, the driver decided to take us on a detour to see an American B-52 bomber that was shot down during the war and now rests in a small lake amongst homes. While touristy, the Cu Chi tunnels give you a vivid glimpse into life underground – how on earth did the Viet Cong last down there for so long? Or, brace yourself for the exhibitions of the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City (captions in Vietnamese and English) which is tough going – for a reprieve, head downstairs for an insight into the anti-war movement.

LAZE on a beach for a decent amount of time. While it rarely gets the beach hype of other Asian destinations, Vietnam is a diligent, quiet achiever with stunning, clean shores and bath-like temperatures. And perhaps the best bit: there are few crowds or buzzing jet skis in front of the five-star hotels, just lapping waves for your viewing and listening pleasure. Our pick: Phu Quoc island for a cool sand-and-jungle combo (Long Beach and Ong Lan are great choices), Con Dao islands for isolation or Nha Trang if you're looking for a more lively resort feel.

SECLUDED
BEACH DINING AT
ANANTARA MUI NE

SHOP or just watch a Vietnamese market in full flight. It's not a trip to Asia without a trip to the market (and everyone needs a bag of bones for their holiday). Our picks: Saigon night markets for a lively time or the intimate Hoi An morning market to meet locals (some hotels will take you here on a personalised tour and cook the produce for you).

FOODIES: FEAST ON THIS IN HANOI

If all you do is eat in Hanoi, consider it a visit well executed. While there are some sights (from temples to the red bridge and paddle swans on a lake; we suggest you give the puppet show a wide berth) this city is all about immersing yourself in its flavour. It's a foodie's heaven with a non-descript gem tucked away on almost every corner, so here's our top five:

1. **PHO GIA TRUYEN** for pho. A massive pot of stock bubbles at the ready with beef chunks (raw to pre-cooked option) added at your wish. There's always a line and beef pho is all this tiny eatery sells, so get in early as they do sell out and prepare to share your table and/or your stool with the crowds. (49 Bat Dan)

2. **BUN CHA NEM CUA BE** for bun cha. Run by a lovely family, they serve one dish and one dish only, which happens to be one of the city's most famous and most popular: grilled pork or pork rissoles on a bed of noodles with fresh herbs, condiments and a tangy dipping sauce or clear soup. (67 Duong Thanh St)

3. **CHA CA THANG LONG** for Cha Ca Thang Long. Again, just one thing on the menu here. The food arrives as soon as you sit and without as much of an order: turmeric-marinated snakehead fish on a sizzling hotplate with lashings of dill, mint, coriander, chillies, peanuts, onion and mam nem fermented anchovy sauce. This is the editor's pick of this city and is perfect washed down with a local beer. (21-31 Duong Thang St)

4. **DO NUONG TRUNG HOA** for grilled meat of almost any variety. Tables sprawl the footpath and diners sit on tiny stools around their glowing hotplate. Pick your meat or vegetables and the cooking process starts while you sip beer, casually get caught in the rain and witness a motorbike incident or two as your emu cooks away (which incidentally, we didn't realise was 'big bird' until afterward). There are more sensible – and more random – things on offer, depending on your taste. (66 Hang Bong)

5. **BUNBO NAM BO** for Bun bo Nam Bo. Rather than a refined stock like that which is used for pho, the sauce here is a combo of fish sauce, sugar, lemon and chili, served on vermicelli, beef, veggies, roasted peanuts and copious amounts of fried onions. Enjoy communal tables, a rare breeze and a great drinks selection. (67 Hang Dieu)





TOUR: WORK SAIGON

We ask Work Saigon co-founder Laure Chevallier about the nitty gritty of setting up shop in Ho Chi Minh City.



ANY TIPS FOR PEOPLE WANTING TO START A CREATIVE BUSINESS IN VIETNAM?

Reach out for help. Don't try to do it alone. You don't have to, and you shouldn't. We find that if you're nice, people here are more than happy to help. They've been in your position before, so their first-hand knowledge comes a long way in navigating Vietnam's business climate.

AND TIPS FOR TRAVELLERS?

Shin Coffee for coffee, Au Parc for breakfast and the awesome view. We get our drinks at Pasteur Street Brewery or Azumaya on Le Thanh Ton. If you're a tourist, go to Triip.me and get a personalised tour.

ANY NEW TRENDS OR CHALLENGES FOR ENTREPRENEURS HERE?

Legal and accounting continue to be challenging for entrepreneurs. Many new businesses also come with new business models that challenge existing legal frameworks. This is especially challenging for our expats who may not have the language skills or legal status to overcome it.

TELL US ABOUT WORK SAIGON – WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT?

There are only a handful of co-working spaces in town. Many have a different focus than ours – one focuses on developers, one focuses on team spaces, one focuses on incubation and investment. We focus on making every individual feel comfortable and part of a creative community. Also, we have a really great coffee shop. Compared to the [rest of the] world, we benefit from being in Saigon. The food is great. The cost is relatively low. The energy is crazy. The people are welcoming. Now imagine you have a comfortable place in the middle of it all. That's Work Saigon.

WHO ARE YOU ATTRACTING AND WHY?

We have a lot of freelance designers here, some start-ups in ecommerce and P2P, a few coders [and] a lot of digital marketers. We mostly attract people who are directly involved in some creative industry or need people who are, probably because of the design of the space and because of the cafe.

WHO'S INSPIRING YOU IN THE CITY AT THIS TIME?

We've been very inspired by our friends, Leandro at Hey Camel Bazaar who recently opened a handmade ceramic shop, and Lou and Bernard at Efaisto who launched an ecommerce platform that connects the artisan to the buyers and allows you to customise your order. We love how, in an era of mass-produced furniture, these entrepreneurs bring us handmade limited designs and get us closer to nature and individuality. Each piece is a reflection of the artisan's craft.



DOING BIZ IN VIETNAM

FACT: In 2014, there were 750,000 businesses in Vietnam and 390,000 of them were created in the five years prior, according to the Vietnam Chamber of Industry and Trade.

EMERGING INDUSTRIES: Logistics, healthcare, agrifood

ETIQUETTE 101:

The seven commandments for taking business to Vietnam:

- 1) The Vietnamese are punctual and will expect the same of you.
- 2) Always make an appointment, in advance and preferably through a local representative.
- 3) Never make promises you can't keep.
- 4) Expect negotiations to be slow.
- 5) Relationships are key to business success.
- 6) Expect silence over confrontation.
- 7) Giving gifts at business meetings is commonplace.

WHAT: Work Saigon, a niche, design-focused co-working space in District 3, Ho Chi Minh City

WHO: Co-founders Laure Chevallier and Tuan Le

FEATURES: Coffee roasted onsite, food prepared by local chefs using produce from the organic balcony garden, a creativity school and swimming pool

DEAL: Day passes are free with a cafe purchase if you are visiting Saigon and need a place to work, or organise unlimited monthly access

THE START-UP SCENE IS BUZZING IN HO CHI MINH CITY. TELL US ABOUT THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT THERE?

It's inspiring. Relatively low-cost, [there is a] growing middle class, [increasing] availability of internet, proliferation of mobile devices, a new generation of skilled labour, foreign investments. All that meets a culture where everyone owns their small business, from banh mi stands to auto repair shops. We've seen start-ups in P2P delivery, edtech, fintech, and so on.





TOUR: HOI AN

We asked Townske.com traveller Amy Lam, banker, to show us around this UNESCO world heritage listed town beside the Thu Bon river. "Discover the gems of this little ancient town, filled with lanterns, yellow mustard houses and the best baguettes ever," she says.



THE OLD TOWN The town itself is what pulls the people here – the bridge, yellow houses, pretty lanterns, the lake and quiet laneways. The overall vibe of the town is relaxed and slow, the way a vacation should be. This was a big contrast to the bustling city centre of Hanoi and I thoroughly enjoyed just walking through the streets and seeing how the locals lived.

REACHING OUT TEAHOUSE This is not like any other cafe I've been to. The teahouse is run by the hearing- and speech-impaired and communication is solely via words written on wooden planks, pen and paper. The whole vibe of the experience is to encourage less talking and more appreciation of the tea. Hence, the cafe is tranquil and everyone is respectful towards this. The proceeds are also placed back into training other people with disabilities, so it's for a great cause. I went to Hoi An in July and it was around 35 degrees celsius, so we hid in this tranquil spot to cool down and rehydrate.

JAPANESE COVERED BRIDGE Rich in history, this modest bridge was built in the early 17th century and remains very popular with tourists to this day.

BANH MI PHUONG I've eaten a lot of banh mi in my time, so when I say I still dream of this baguette, it must have been pretty damn good. This place became widely popular since being featured on Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations*. I had seconds the first time, went back for a midnight snack the same day and went again to grab a banh mi next morning before leaving Hoi An. Everyone about this baguette was perfection. I may be exaggerating, but everything worked for me. The baguette itself was crispy, the sauce was concentrated and meat filling generous. Yum!

CARRY WITH YOU

SUGAR & SPICE WHITE/DARK TORTOISE SUNGLASSES AU\$240, paredeyewear.com



MAY LINDSTORM THE CLEAN DIRT CLEANSING CLAY 200ML AU\$95 net-a-porter.com



FOSSIL PRESTON BACKPACK AU\$379 fossil.com.au



THE BODY SHOP LIP & CHEEK STAIN AU\$24.95 thebodyshop.com.au



SMYTHSON MADDUX LEATHER TRAVEL WALLET AND PASSPORT COVER AU\$750 net-a-porter.com



ADIDAS BY STELLA MCCARTNEY CAP AU\$76 net-a-porter.com



HAMMAMAS SET OF TWO STRIPED WOVEN COTTON TOWELS AU\$97 net-a-porter.com