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280313-010413 VIETNAM HOCHIMINH CITY

Travel, Vietnam

★★★★★ ⓘ 1 VOTE

I have always enjoyed travelling to attend overseas weddings and Musoke's wedding invitation gave me a good reason to visit Saigon City (currently known as Ho Chi Minh City). I have always wanted to visit this land of the heart-thumping Drip Coffee so that I can add on more coffee pictures to my coffee blog!

We took a mid-day flight to HCMC via Jetstar and it was just a short 1.5 hours flight away from Singapore. In fact, perfect for a short weekend getaway with great food.

Before I even planned for the trip, I was warned of bogus taxis and pickpockets. Do read up on the bogus taxis over the Internet and for pickpockets, just watch your belongings (Just that you know, I had a really safe time in HCMC).

For facts sake, Vietnam is also the world's most populous country (as of July 2012).

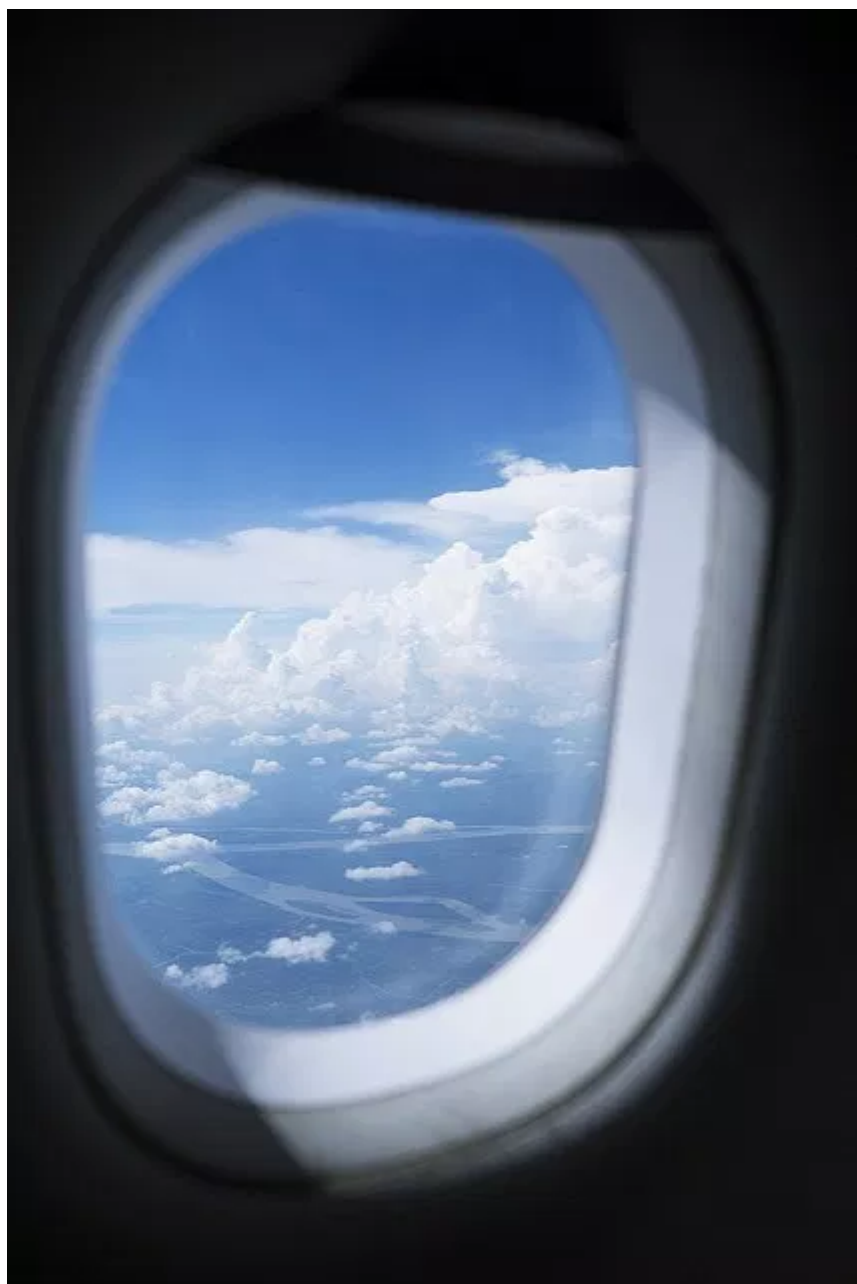
The images in the blog post revolves around HMC District One (except for Cu Chi Tunnel) and

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Enjoy the post, pardon my lack in writing up the post as exciting as it is in my memories so I hope my pictures will give you a better idea of the great times I had there!



Blue skies always meant a really hot weather but photographers love it, I do.



Upon arrival, after we collected our luggages, we turn to the extreme left to buy “Data” simcard so that blogging and facebooking can be done on the go. It cost only about 100,000 VND for 1.5GB worth of data and it was good enough for these 5 days (Note: many places in HCMC have WiFi spots).



At the same area to the extreme right, there is a taxi counter where taxis can be booked. It cost 250,000 VND, which is a bit steep. However, this saves us a problem of flagging down crook taxis (if we go out of the arrival hall) that may drive you a long distance or have fares meters that jumps unusually fast. Note that from the city to the airport, it can be as cheap as about 140,000 VND.



The viet chap who brought us to get a legit taxi with the taxi coupon.





Think the toll fee he had to pay before he left the airport, was about 20,000 VND.



On the way to our accommodation.



Our hotel room in Catina Hotel. It's a 3 star hotel, which cost less than 100 singapore dollars a night. Cleanliness and staff were all tip-top. The only drawback was there were no windows (that's a fake window you see in the picture LOL) and makes one lose sense of the day and night.



The clean corridor that made me feel real at home, so wanna roll through the entire corridor. LOL.





5 litres for us to last the 5 days through the nights. Bigger than her face. hehe



It was Easter so they folded the towel into a bunny!





A night scene along the street where we stayed (Dong Khoi)



A shot of Catina hotel across the road in the night



One shot of us before we start exploring upon reaching.



For the next few photos, they are mainly pictures of bikes, bikes & bikes accumulated throughout the trip. Motorbikes are so entrenched in the daily lives of most Vietnamese (a search on the internet shows 1 in 4.5 owns a motorbike!). By the way, motorcycles are made for weaving pass human traffic too so dont be too shocked figuring out how to cross the road. Do like the locals do, confidently!!





Many of the ladies there are fully covered despite the hot weather. That's what keeps them so fair I guess.



Bicycles were also another mode of transport.



They don't many have big rubbish trucks so they make do with more of these smaller scale mobile cleaners.



There is always a motorbike in the picture (80% of the time).



See? I told ya...







Panning a bike shot





Their wirings are so untamed too. I wonder how their technicians fix when in times of circuit failure.





Sunglasses, Sir?



Interesting floor patterns on the street that I took so randomly.





Among all the bikes in the city, you do see some really nice bikes that stand out. Here's a really suave chopper.





The Conical asian is another of the street culture here, where many hawkers peddling the street will wear to beat the sun.





Just look at in the furthest point of the picture. Enough bikes?



We decided to go to Cu Chi tunnel to understand what the Vietnamese have gone through in the World War. It took us about an hour+ to get there.



A mockup of the 3 levels of narrow tunnels in Cu Chi. Amazing how they can live in there for so long, including cooking. There were airholes for ventilations and cooking, they also had booby traps in place for those enemies that entered.





Demonstrating how their people use a small shovel and basket to dig the tunnels, also explaining the use of a smaller tunnel: Americans cannot pass through due to their big sizes, smaller tunnels take shorter time to dig and was more resistant to bombs.





One of the booby traps in placed for their enemies in World War 2.





Just leaves.



Now we get to see the hidden tunnel!





A live demonstration of how they got in and out.





My turn!



A Japanese lady decides to try it too.





Looks like she enjoyed it!



It was a tighter for the Caucasians because of their built.





He still manages it through.







Along the tour journey, there were holes here and there, which were all part of the interconnected Cu Chi tunnel.





An airhole that came out from an ants nest, which is such a good disguise.



One shot for Cu Chi.





Some of the many booby traps.



The swinging door trap. Imagine opening the door to have all the long nails driving into your body. Ouch.









A demonstration of the sandals created by the Vietnamese from tires. The brilliance to it was, it can be worn in reverse so it was used to mislead enemies on the directions of their footsteps.





One of the many tunnels



Surrounded by beautiful bamboo trees.



One of the many electrical lights in the tunnel, which I doubt existed in WWII



One of the Caucasians who was ahead of me in the tour (This tunnel is already widened for tourists and he is fitting in just right)





Along the way, I see openings above me. I believe this links to another part of the tunnel.





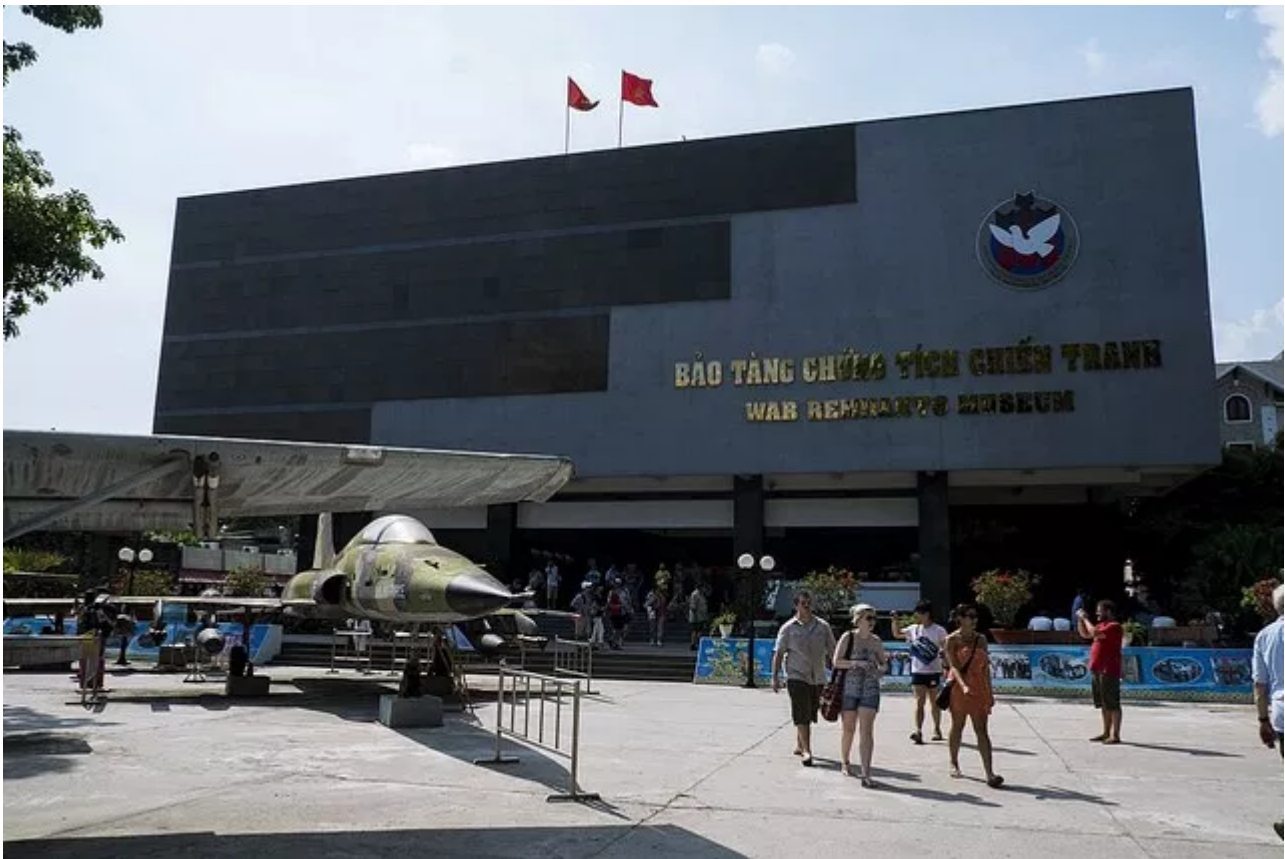
Food consumed by the locals during those days, tapioca with grated peanut+salt



Bombshells of many sizes



After the tour, we got off at the War Remnants Museum along the way back. It's not a happy (in fact, very sad) place, it consists of many unhappy memories for them I would say but it's a part of history.







There is this section on “Tiger cage” where it suggests all the POW taking place.







Guillotine used by the French to behead prisoners. = (



Bullets used in the war.



I guess freedom is all they ask for...



Next was the Reunification Palace, which happens to be just a street away.





Can't help getting a silhouette of ourselves.



Picture of the Reunification Palace, looks very communist doesn't it?











A local basking in the sun. I see that as a good photo opportunity.



We walked on towards Notre Dame Cathedral to see this infamous architecture. I have always been a fan of architectures made of brick walls. They all look so good!





Another silhouette of us while the sun is still blazing on us.





A sunny view of Notre Dame with the great skies and sun. Apparently for touristy shots, its good to capture this place in the morning. For more arty farty shots with shadows and closeups, evenings can bring another mood to it.





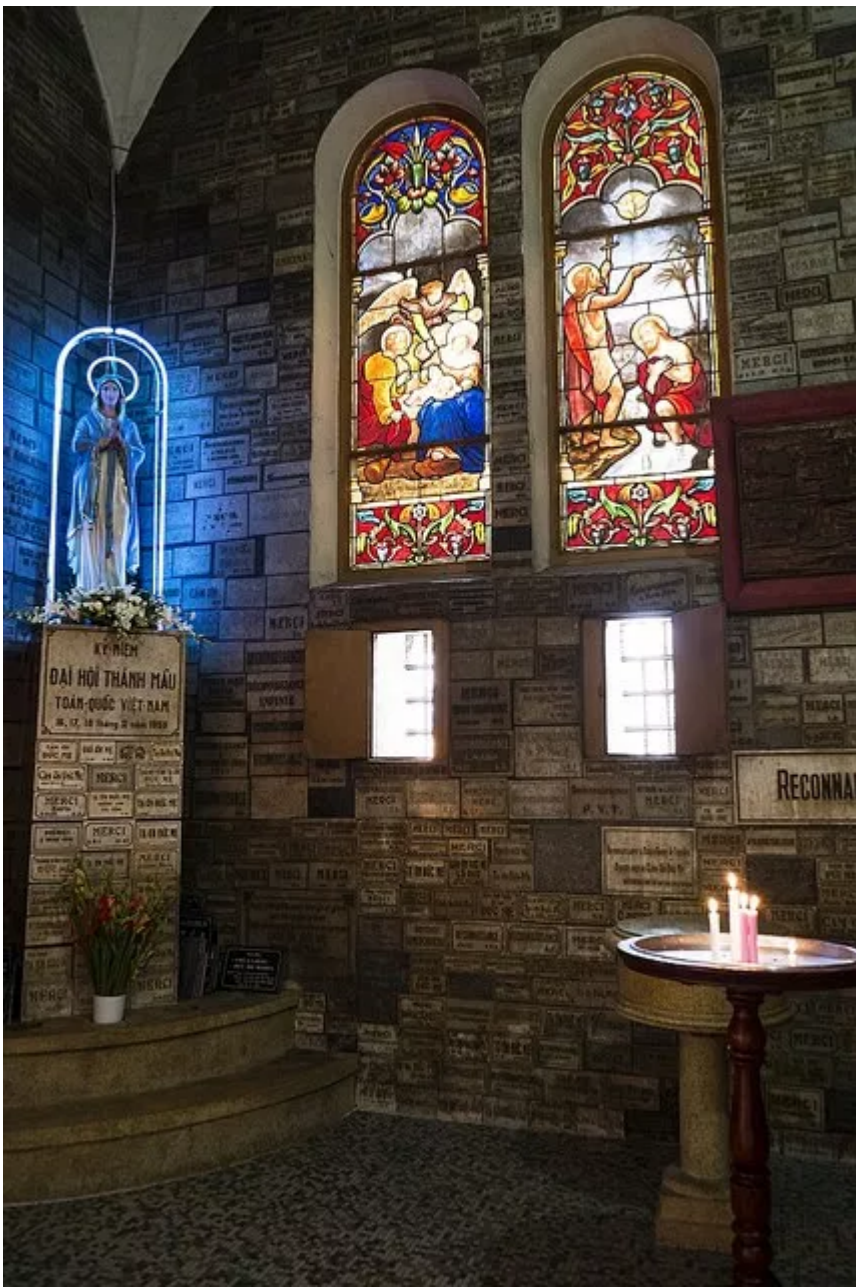
Her and the city.



Texture of the floor in the cathedral

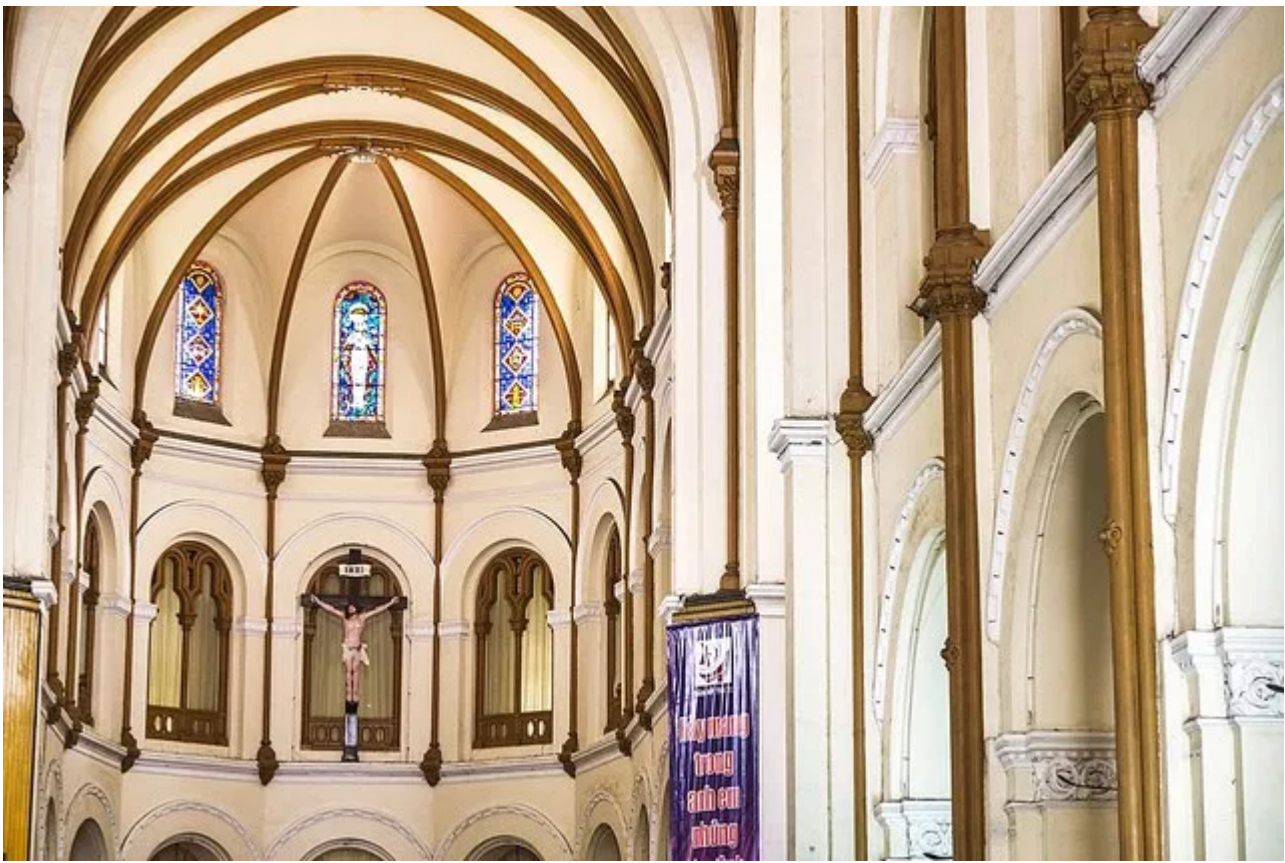


People who help make a part of this place.





The beautiful interior of the cathedral with the very high ceiling that makes it look so grand.





The "cursive fonts" of the gates imprinted on the ground as the rays of the sun touched it





Locals selling Catholics related touristy items right outside the church and I almost bought something for CheeKeong but didn't do so as religion stuff are quite personal I thought.



She, me and Notre Dame



A random snapshot before we proceeded on.



Blue hour of Notre Dame in the evening.



I decided to walk on to find another popular destination called the Jade Emperor Pagoda temple. It's along this stretch of road and I wouldn't really suggest going there as it is not really near unless you take a taxi (I didn't zoom in enough to realise it was a long walk from Notre Dame to this place. LOL



Grabbed a couple shot along the way, which was supposed to have many motorcycles but darn my shaky hands



We finally reached the Jade Emperor Pagoda temple (cantonese) after about 30-45 mins of walking.





There were many tortoises in the small pool, which could be set free by devotees (as you can see, there are words on the back of some)



From research on the internet, this temple is actually quite a popular temple locally in district 1.













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Saw an advertisement of a body building club that used Arnold.S as their “spokesperson”. hehe



A picture of the post office in the day



And another shot of the Central Post Office at this dusk hour. Beautiful french looking architecture, especially before it goes totally dark.



A shot of how it looks like in the day. As you can also see Uncle Ho's picture is hung up in many places and is very highly regarded (Political leader Ho Chi Minh)



One of the mornings while on the way to find breakfast, I decided to buy the waffle from the street hawker as it smelt so good as I walked by since day 1! It cost me 50,000 VND, which was a total rip off. Locals probably paid 3,000 for it only.





Ho Chi Min City Museum



Loved the flares of the sun!





Old Vietnam currency notes



Old Vietnam coin



A communist piece of wall drawing inside the museum



Near to the HCMC Museum was HCMC Cityhall, which had a physical statue of Mr Ho carrying a child. No entry is allowed into the building at all times for tourists. Phototaking near the building is also prohibited so take a quick few shots before the guards starts blowing his whistle.



It was recommended over the internet to take pictures of this place at night as it will be nicely lit up. I do agree with that.







A shot of the guard stopping me from taking photographs of the place. Too bad I got my shot. =D



Next on the list was Ben Tenh Market, which was one of the places recommended to go too. This man on horse at a roundabout is one of the prominent landmarks that is beside the market (I have updated it on the map later in this post too)



As mentioned, the man on horse at the roundabout is on the left of this image (cannot be seen here)





Many tight lanes, which sells many clothing, fabrics, bags, lacquer plates, coffee etc (However, strong bargaining skills are required. I learnt that after being sold a lacquer plate for 50 SGD. Ouch.)









This is the Opera House where they have theaters or plays held inside. On this very day, they have a performance at the entrance so the locals just stopped their bike to enjoy.





For recommendations sake, I was told to go to the Norfolk hotel vicinity to look for **Kim Hair Salon** for hair spa. I saw it directly opposite the hotel but didn't have a chance to try it. Next time maybe.







Majestic Hotel, where we are attending the wedding banquet at. This is also the oldest hotel in HCMC. Really majestic, ain't it?



HOTEL MAJESTIC
SAIGON - VIETNAM
Since 1925

Lễ Thành Hân

Chú Rể:

John Musoke

Cô Dâu:

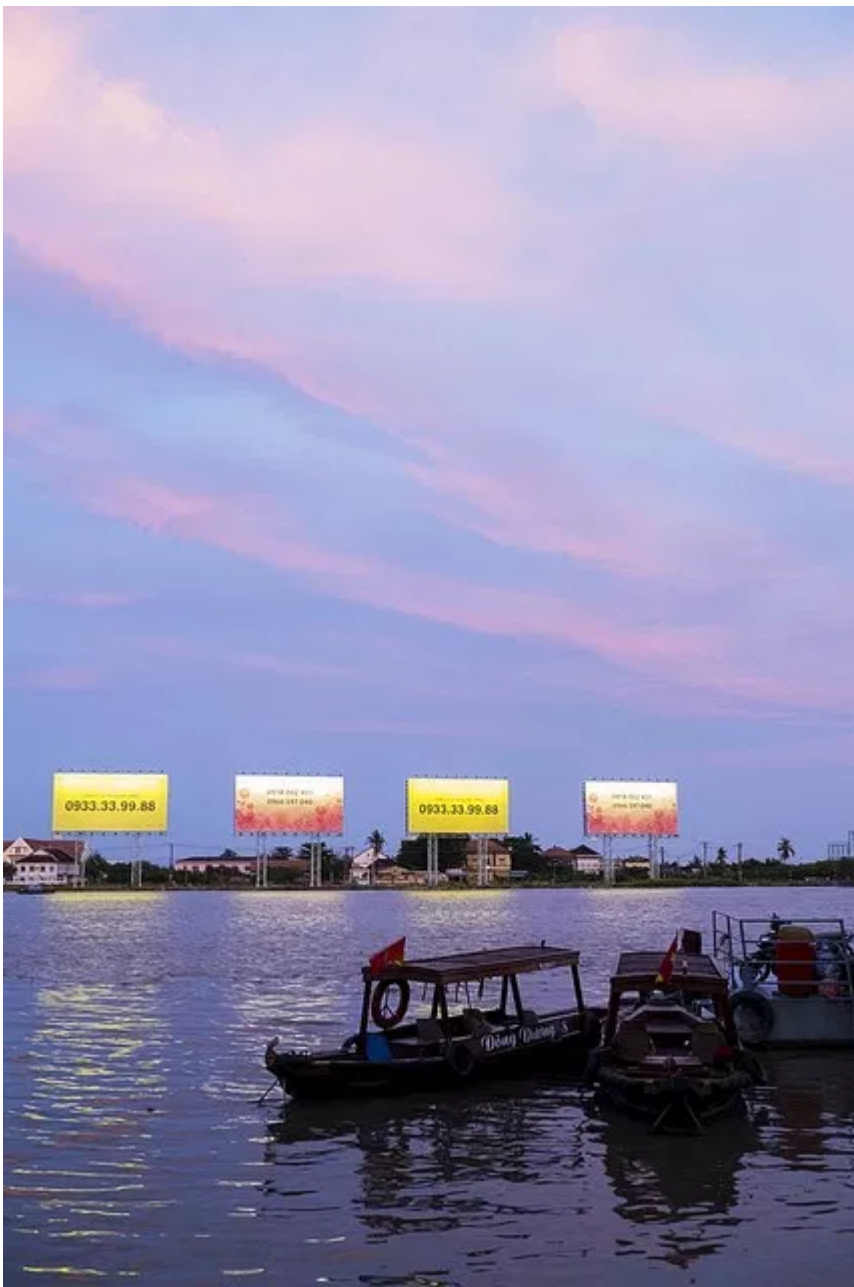
Phấn Thảo

31/03/2013

Tại Tầng 5



Flag of Vietnam flying high in Saigon river with the beautiful evening hues.





The blue hour is always one of the best time of the day to see great colours.





Musoke and Thao's wedding. They got someone to paint a photo I took for them! So nice!



In their traditional Vietnamese wear. So cute!









John ♥ Thảo

**THANK
YOU**

31.03.2013



Dance performance before they couple march in.





Here comes the blissful couple!







Just like Singaporeans, weddings in Vietnam also had cake cutting



and pouring of well, this is a little different, red wine or grape juice. It was not meant to be drank though.



They had their couple toasting too (so similar to us yea)



Time to throw the bouquet!



Reaching...



Saw the hands who grabbed it? It's Musoke's aunty. LOL!



These girls were enjoying themselves!



Thao enjoying the moment of throwing the bouquet.





Dong Khoi road at around 10pm in the night.... great for a romantic stroll.





On the early evening flight back to Singapore.



Alfresco (Only look at the last item on the signage). Yea, they are famous for ribs I was told.



Crayons to write/draw a note to the pig that sacrifice it's ribs for my hunger.



This is the junior ribs, which is so so. I was told that I should have ordered the Pygmy Ribs instead.



The lady didn't like the beef at all. A simple review was "Chewy".



Signature wings (basically the same sauce used on the ribs and I rather have the ribs).



Pygmy ribs tasted much better and more tender. Now I understand why I was recommended this dish.



When in Saigon, do like the Saigons! Drink Saigon beer!



Ice Chocolate for the pretty lady!



Trung Coffee, just like their local-styled barrista coffee joints (We have Coffeebean and Starbucks in Singapore). Worth trying but it ain't that cheap.



Chocolate Cheese Cake. Nahhhh.



Vietnamese Drip Coffee No.5 Success at HCMC District 1, Dong Khoi road. This was intense, smooth and rich!



Vietnamese Drip Coffee No.4 Creation at HCMC District 1, Dong Khoi road. It was chocolaty. Interesting.



Pineapple smoothie. She loved it.



Ice Chocolate for the non coffee lovers.





Now, remember this is Augustin French restaurant (A must eat in HCMC!)



Interior of Augustin



Time for a french dinner!



Warm baguette that went really well with the hard butter



Chicken cream soup that was filled with goodness. yum yum yum. 140,000VND



Her Roasted pork fillet with apple, cavados & cream sauce. Too much meat for her but flavor was just right and not too heavily marinated. 180,000VND



My Pan fried chicken breast with cream sauce and onion. I love it, the creamy sauce and the tender meat (that's if you enjoy breast meat like I do) 160,000VND



Panfried Mackerel fish with hollandaise sauce. It tasted normal, nothing fanciful. 200,000VND



Panfried seabass fillet with cream, lemon and ginger sauce (this is so awesome! Recommended by a Korean who often patronized this shop) 240,000VND



Warm chocolate cake with liquor sauce by the side (I cannot recall the name or price!). If you enjoy liquor desserts, go for this (else the soufflé is good I heard)



Creme Brulee. The layer of burnt sugar at the top was just too hard to enjoy the dessert so it's a no no for us, especially her. 75,000VND



Saigon Special at Augustin



Choi Go Jip Korean restaurant near the Opera House, which is also recommended.







All BBQ food just tastes good. haha





I thought the egg was yummy but she said you can get it better in Singapore. LOL.



Not really a fan of Korean food so it's pretty hard for me to comment but I would have to say that it tasted pretty awesome to me though!



Sapporo at Choi Go Jip



Viet Fried rice at Green Leaf Cafe (beside Catina hotel). It cost only about 4-5 SGD but the amount of seafood was amazing! It had real scallops. Come on, you don't get scallops with a 4 bucks fried rice in Singapore!



Pho for the lady (I am guilty of not trying a single bowl of Pho in Vietnam LOL)



Desserts at Givral



Just for display (not edible)



We have yet to find really great chocolate cakes in HCMC or maybe we don't know where to get but the chocolates were just a little short of calling it great.



Pineapple smoothie



Chocolate Yogurt



Fanny Icecream (I just learnt Fanny means a lady's private part in Brit and a bum in US. Oh man, we ate Fanny)



My Berry Bamboo made me bery bery happy.



Her safari was a great combination with popcorns in the middle.



Map 1 for your useful navigation in HCMC District 1

1) Catina Hotel

2) Augustine French restaurant

3) Alfresco Ribs

4) Opera House

5) Korean restaurant

6) Cityhall

7) HCMC City Museum

8) Norfolk Hotel (Hair Spa)

9) Post Office

10) NotreDame

11) Jade Pagoda Temple

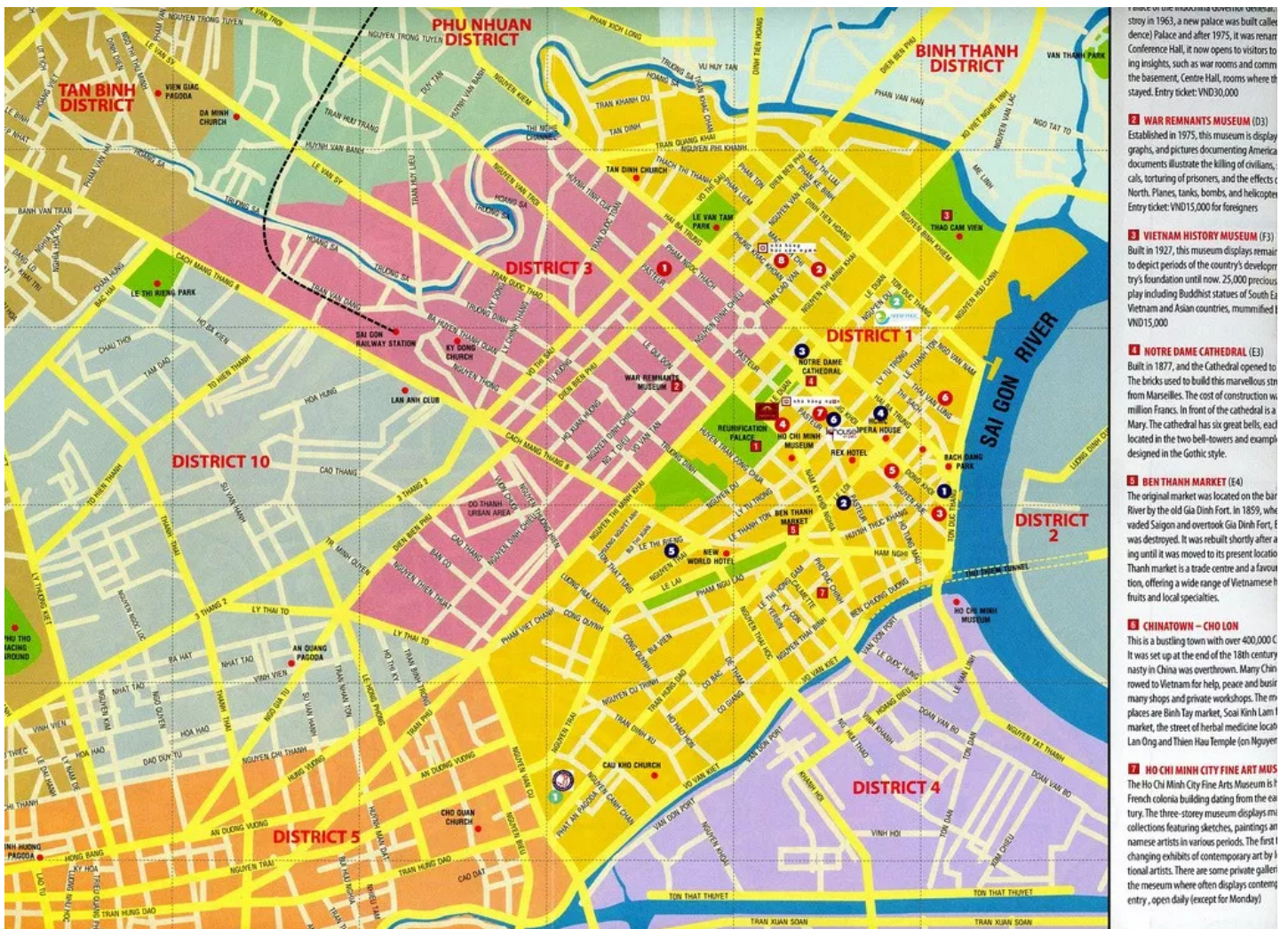
12) Reunification Palace

13) War Remnants Museum

14) Benh Thanh Market



Map 2 for your useful navigation in HCMC District 1



Scanned map from one of their magazine of a overview of HCMC

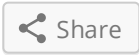
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April 12, 2013 · 2 Comments

2 THOUGHTS ON “280313-010413 VIETNAM HOCHIMINH CITY”



JOHN MUSOKE

April 12, 2013 at 5:18 pm · Reply

Great work as always, love the comments and of course the photos



BIGBERT

April 12, 2013 at 5:40 pm · Author · Reply

Thanks John! Glad you dropped by virtually!

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