

EXPAT LIFE

IN THAILAND

Apr/May 2020

250B

Education . Art and Culture . Music . Travel . Healthcare . Food and Nutrition . Health and Fitness

Duang Prateep
Foundation

To board
or not
to board

Argentinian,
South African,
Cambodian
Ambassadors
interviewed
inside!

Adana
Legros
Stefan
Sanchez

The Paris
Fashion Show

From Russia
with love

Tradition and culture

ENGAGE AND CONNECT:

Web: www.expatlifethailand.com Email: subscribe@elbkk.com
f [expatlifethailand](https://www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand) Instagram: [@expatlifethailand](https://www.instagram.com/expatlifethailand) Twitter: [@ExpatLifeThai](https://twitter.com/ExpatLifeThai)

Please read, enjoy and
pass on to other readers to share!

Get connected with us!

Web: www.expatlifethailand.com

Facebook: [expatlifethailand](https://www.facebook.com/expatlifethailand)

Email: subscribe@elbkk.com

Instagram: [@expatlifethailand](https://www.instagram.com/expatlifethailand)

Twitter: [@ExpatriateLife](https://twitter.com/ExpatriateLife)



CONTENTS

FEATURE

- 10 Argentinian Ambassador
- 18 The King of Bhutan
- 22 South African Ambassador
- 30 Cambodian Ambassador
- 36 Bratislava

PROFILE

- 40 Adana Legros
- 46 Stefan Sanchez

NGO

- 50 Duang Prateep Foundation

EDUCATION

- 54 Newton Sixth Form
- 60 To board or not to board
- 71 Blockchain in education
- 76 Boys of Summer

TRAVEL

- 84 Cam Ranh
- 90 Vietnam and Halong Bay
- 94 Vietnamese Coffee
- 110 Women of PNG
- 114 Amsterdam
- 116 Doha
- 120 Sanur, Bali
- 124 Russia with love
- 130 Sumatra
- 134 Phangna Bay
- 144 Unexpected home

FOOD AND NUTRITION

- 100 Brain healthy food (part 2)
- 104 How is your relationship with food

EVENTS

- 138 Pink Polo
- 174 Social pics

BOOK REVIEW

- 147 Dance Me to the End of Time

FASHION

- 148 French fashion show
- 152 Fashion with Talar

DESTINATIONS

- 156 Top 10 rooftop bars

EXPAT LIFE

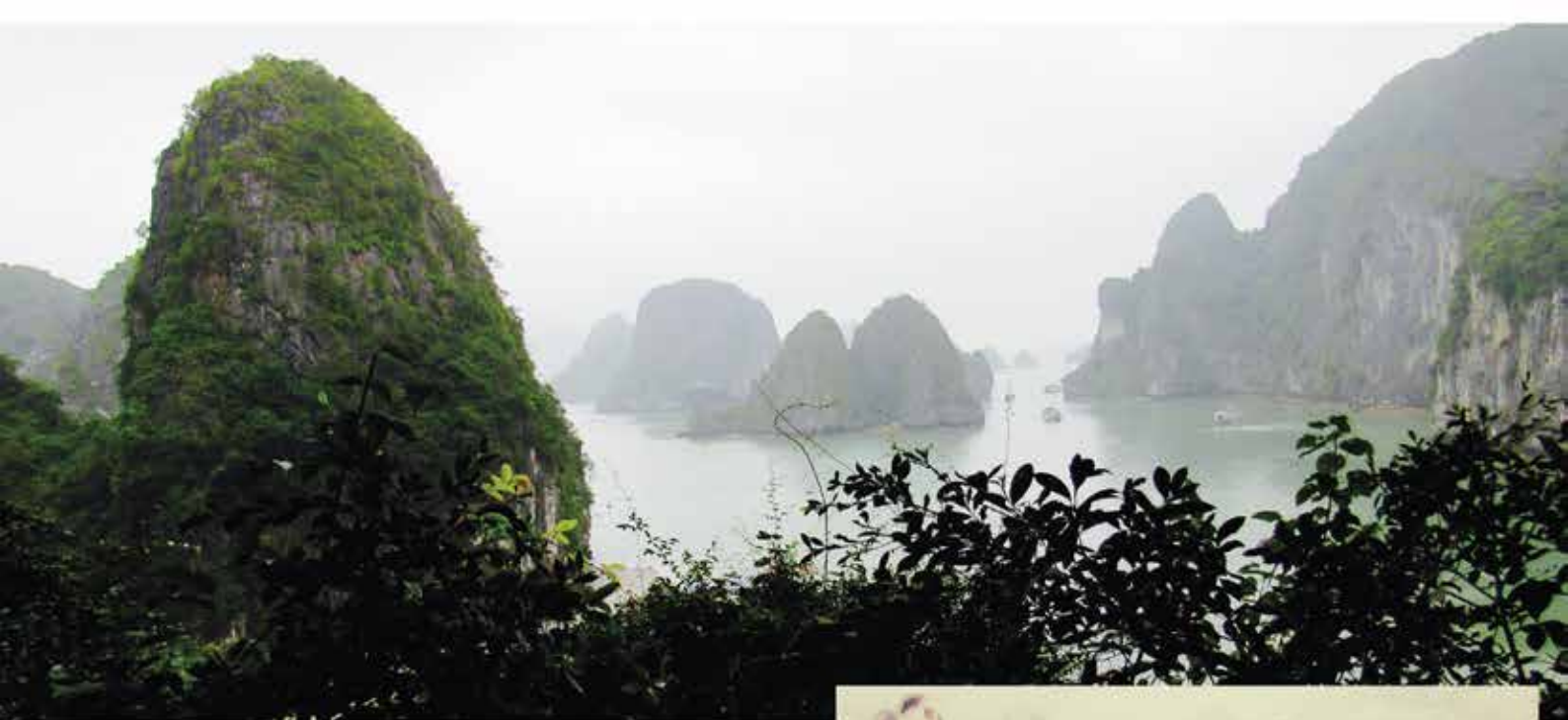
- 162 Ten things the government must do to stifle the smog
- 164 Community choir
- 170 A couple moves to Bangkok
- 174 Pattaya's top 10 shopping venues

FICTION

- 166 Bangkok Madam

HEALTH AND FITNESS

- 178 Savvy shoe selector



Hanoi - Halong Bay Unmasked

by Kay Natesan

When you are repeatedly told to not go somewhere, because of an outbreak of a virulent virus around, your heart rebels; you want to prove the world wrong, perhaps with an even stronger intent and purpose. We went right ahead, like two petulant kids who would do as they please.

With a mere four days in which to discover a new country – essentially its capital city Hanoi and a legendary bay (Halong), declared a World Heritage Site, we succeeded in squeezing every hour of its capacity and gifted ourselves what we needed, including a stupendous hour in a large souvenir shop near the St. Joseph's Cathedral.

We had booked a small hotel in the middle of the old quarter, and a very busy area it was. It so reminded me of home - of the old city of Delhi, where foreign tourists abound, little shops display a delicious array of wares, small and big eateries thrive, as do a variety of street vendors of all sorts. Two-wheelers ruled the roost and we really had to watch our step, missing pavements notwithstanding. The honking was familiar yet unpleasant. The weather, that was a pleasant surprise - it was around 16C and we were unprepared for the chill in the air, especially after Bangkok. In a few hours after our early arrival, we wrapped up nicely and headed out to get a feel of the place, as it were. A fog laden water body, the lake Hoam Kiem, welcomed us in all its tranquil beauty. We hung around its coffee shops and gazed at the myriad tourists that



had been conjured up from all parts of the world. Vietnamese coffee is distinct and savouring it became part of my journey's ritual.

For the entire length of our stay, it stayed cloudy and an occasional rain reminded us to carry umbrellas. It wasn't what I would have preferred weather-wise, but it was what it was and we made the best of it.

What we loved about Hanoi

Its people

A gentle and courteous lot. We sauntered on our first day, discovering the city of our own accord. We explored unguided and unfettered, like two curious tourists. It was exciting to have finally made it to a country I'd been longing to visit for as long as I can remember.

We often discovered that our route wasn't the one we'd set out on, that too despite a map in the man's able hands. At every wrong turn, we'd ask around and people spoke not a word of English but were still able to guide us with gestures and intelligible sounds. Communication was never a problem. We were already made comfortable in our new surroundings. We couldn't wait to go further out on the following bus tour we'd booked.

Its trees

The city is lush with gigantic trees on elegant streets – all sorts of trees, sweeping the city, one that's awash with the whispers



of leaves, rustling with the wind. I couldn't get enough of these natural beacons. The bus ride we undertook – as is our ritual, a hop-on hop-off city bus to get an idea of where we would wish to return to further explore. It has always worked for us. It was no different on this tour of Hanoi. We set off at 10am and got back to the starting point within 3 hours. The Red River is a sight to behold – its expanse is breathtaking. The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum is another structure you stare at, bewitched, even as the bus speeds past.

The city had many other touristic delights, and waterways, iconic buildings and some very fascinating tree-lined avenues regaled us. Hanoi is called the city of lakes, and it sure is.

Its buildings

Clearly the French have left their mark here. I grew up in Pondicherry, which has also been a French colony. I observed and was consistently reminded of the French footprints of my childhood - the French windows and the typical design and architecture that they seem to thrive on. It has done no harm, if anything it adds to the charm and allure that is Hanoi; the Vietnamese women's museum, for example is a regal structure, and we revisited it. It had an exhibition of Vietnamese fashion going on, which was very exciting to me. The Opera House displays a certain charm, as well as some of the hotels that thrive on ingenuity married to beauty. There is now a quiet march of modern buildings, we noted, coming along haltingly and making their place in Hanoi, in a bid to keep up with the rest of the world. It's okay, not as disturbing to the ambience of this quaint city as one might imagine.

Its food

Although the Vietnamese eat a lot of rice-based vermicelli and noodles, it is of a distinct flavour and taste – and not at all like Thai food, which is far spicier. The gentle appeal on the tastebuds was very pleasant. We had to have one Vietnamese meal a day, and very quickly Pho became a favourite along with the delicious rice spring rolls, both fried and steamed.



06/02/2020



We were in a hurry to sample what they called their iconic sandwich – ‘Paperman’. Our last meal was the sandwich – the bread roll contains what you pick to stuff it with and is chewy in texture, toasted it turned delicious, as the filling oozes into your mouth in a perfect blend of flavours bursting to please. It was nothing like a subway, although that’s the closest culinary technique one can think of, if one must compare. It was outstanding! Other than that, the ordinary fare of pastas and burgers are all there to be had.

Halong Bay

The bay is exactly as one has seen in pictures – beatific, surreal and tranquil. On a cloudy day, it presents an otherworldly feel. Our boat was modern and comfortable, with a terrace deck, and while the winds that caught our hair, was chilly, we were well-clad leaving us to embrace its serenity. There were many other boats sliding along the bay at a distance, which served and nourished the requisites needed to stay awestruck. The guide was humorous but never did he interfere with our joys, discreet when the passage needed him to be so.

Caves housing ancient stalactites on one of the myriad islands, bedazzled us. Trinh Nu (Virgin) cave was one of the caves we visited. Me Cunk (maze) cave was another, and the Surprise cave, each with a distinct character. These

were dimly lit and had us gaping, and wonderstruck.

We strolled through, stopping every now and then to photograph hungrily, even as our vision took it all in. At once meditative and inspired, we listened to the guide, as he pointed out some salient rock formations, likening them to Queen Victoria, or a toad and such like. Fortunately, all of us travellers were united in our need of the same quietude that must permeate such a passage.

The highlight of this visit to the bay was the stop to mount kayaks in twos - from our boat we kayaked for 30 minutes, each way, to an island, where we climbed a stairway only to descend onto an uninhabited beach. What a surprise that was – a hidden gem, invisible from the waters where we had left our kayaks: a white and wide beach with gentle waters lapping the sands. Internally, we were all very stimulated, excited at having this piece of sandy beach all to ourselves for an hour.

Typical Vietnamese fare was served at lunch, on the boat, and was fit for royalty – the courses were endless, and by the end of it, we were satiated. It was all absolutely delicious! Imagine feasting on a boat with views that make you feel you’ve died and are ensconced in a better place than you could ever imagine. We thanked the Gods as we partook of every course, with great gusto.

A trip such as this, ending in a warm bed, in a quaint little hotel – does make you feel nourished despite masked tourists and locals alike. Although four days seemed too short when we set off on this momentous journey, we did come away two satisfied souls, realising that Vietnam had truly given us all we needed: a foray into a country of this beauty and cultural ethos, one we carried back with us as an eternal gift. Time had expanded to allow us to receive what we needed to.

We are certain we’ll return to other places in Vietnam in a different era, when we are not repeatedly discouraged to travel to this part of the world.

