

Welcome to our world, again

Continuing our journey through Vietnam we move Northup the coast.



After leaving Nha Trang, we soon reach Hoi An. This amazing place, known as the Lantern City is a “must see” location during any visit to Vietnam. It is easy to see why this delightful town has got its name, as every street is decorated with beautiful lanterns which, after dark, add a magical air to an already vibrant place. However, appearance alone is not what attracted us. Like most places we visit, it is the food and the people that interest us just as much as the scenery.

In Hoi An we were spoilt. Restaurants abound and one is hard pressed to decide on where the best meal is to be had. Suffice to say that all tastes are well catered for and good quality and good price seem to be the norm. We never had a bad meal here. Hotels too seem to go out of their way to care for their guests in a way unheard of in other places. In my case I celebrated a Birthday whilst staying in Hoi An.

The hotel we stayed at apparently checks all passports on arrival against date of birth. If a guest has a birthday during the stay, then the hotel celebrates it. Imagine my surprise to come down to a Birthday Cake and greetings from the staff on the day. What a lovely gesture!



I shall long remember the kindness of the staff and the excellent management of the hotel, which conspired to make our stay such a special event.

Moving around the centre of Hoi An we were struck by the adherence to tradition which was so evident. In the Market Place we watched as figures were hand carved from rough timber, in a way that has been passed down from generation to generation. An ancient method of purchasing meat for dinner still exists here too.

Poultry and even Dogs are sold alive to customers who take them home, along with the accompanying fresh vegetables, to be slaughtered when needed. No supermarket pre packed food for these lovely people. It is like turning back the pages of time. Due to the nature of the place, none of this seems remotely odd. Should you witness trade of this nature any other place you might well

be shocked. Here however you know that you are part of a bygone age.



As the countryside is so flat there are endless opportunities for walking and cycling. It is real fun to put your bicycle onto the local ferryboats, used to transport workers to the nearby islands, and then explore the islands to your heart's content. The myriad of small uncluttered roads are a joy to travel on.

Everywhere you can find incredibly skilled artisans at work in their studios. Mother of Pearl Inlays for high quality furniture is one of the specialties of the area, and you can see the extremely skilled craft workers employ their art at close quarters. It is a joy to watch the fine cutting techniques being employed in front of your eyes. No large mass production here, just centuries of acquired skills, still being used to support the people of the area even today.



Life on the river seems also to be from a past age. Ancient craft ply the beautiful river. I can truly say that the scenery along the river bank is amazing.

Glimpses can be had through the dense undergrowth of small hamlets and their occupants, living out their normal lives, apparently unaware of the tourist trade. On a longtail boat ride along the estuary, to where it meets the sea can be seen evidence of the fisherman's life. Modern versions of huge static fishing nets abound.

These nets can be raised and lowered into the water, depending on the tides to catch a plentiful supply of fish. Hoi An is fast becoming a popular tourist destination and with plans afoot for the massive development on this coast it might not be as attractive in years to come.

It has been suggested that the Vietnamese Government intend to develop 30 kilometers of coastline from Da Nang (where the local airport is located) to Hoi An. A development such as this will inevitably lead to high rise hotels and apartment blocks dotted willy nilly along the coast and could well destroy the real beauty of the whole area. Ah well such is the voracious world of finance in which we now live. I must be careful not to stray into my favorite subject. That will be for another episode maybe.



We finished our journey in Hanoi. A huge congested city with much architectural merit. There is, like most cities, lots to do and whether it is a trip to the famous Halong Bay or to what is described as Mini Halong you need never be idle for long. As Halong Bay has become a major tourist attraction we settled for the alternative.

A full day on the river, culminating in a visit to an incredible cave with religious undertones. It was a trip we really enjoyed. Next time I hope to take you with us on a visit to Britain to visit some of our favorite spots.

