



What About Vietnam – S4-E7 – Hué the city – past, present and future

Kerry Newsome: 00:18

Xin Chào and welcome to “[What About Vietnam!](#)” I'm really thrilled to bring you today's program, because we're going to be talking about a city, which I've wanted to talk about on this show for quite some time. But it's taken me a little while to find the right person, and to really do it justice. Now, the city is steeped in history. From the French occupancy through to what they refer to as the American war. So just to give you a little bit of background, Hué actually was the capital city of Vietnam for about 150 years, during 1802 to 1945, which, when you think about it, wasn't that long ago. It is very well known for its imperial Citadel, Royal mausoleums, and iconic pagodas. But what you don't get a real feel for until you've spoken to someone who's seen it and has really done a circumference of the city, having lived there, is some of the relics of that past and some of the wartime scars that still exist in those relics.

01:52

Anders Krystad is my guest on the show today, and what makes Anders special is that he's written a travel guidebook about Hué and did this just prior to COVID. And after reading it, I just knew he was the right person to be able to present Hué to you in the correct manner of respect that I wanted to give it. And also, to give you some rich detail. So just some things about the river. Some things about the food, which, whilst we've known for quite a long time, that Hué is right up there on the totem pole, as far as food, I didn't really understand why. But after this podcast, you're going to know why. And just some bits and pieces about accommodation, and the variables that are available to you. He's just got so much to share.

02:49

I just want to fill in a little bit of his background. He's former director of the project Football For All in Vietnam. And he did that between 2001 in 2016, retired in 2018, but obviously not one to sit idle. He contracts now to the project part time. In addition, he set up his own consultancy company, and is involved with a football club for kids, a not for profit grassroots club.

I hope you're going to enjoy the program, stick with it as it's a beefy one. It's got lots of elements to it. So, use your timestamps. If you want to click through to certain aspects that you think you're most interested in, you'll definitely want to spend more than, one or two nights in Hué after you hear from Anders, what he has to say. And I just hope you really enjoy the show as much as I enjoyed putting it together. Let's say hello to Anders.

03:53

You're going to go to a short message and then we'll be back to the show.

04:03 [Special Offers – by What About Vietnam](#)

Just before we jump into our chat with Anders, I thought I would just give you a quick snapshot of two offers that we have just put up on the What About Vietnam podcast website.

One offer is called [the Nurturing Indulgence Package](#). And the other is called the [Immersive Indulgence package](#). Now the reason I wanted to tell you about them in this show is that they are at the [Alba Wellness Retreat](#), just outside of Huế. So, I thought well if you want to go to Hue and then you'd like to experience a wellness day spa, then you can jump on these offers as they're only 40 minutes away from you, from the main city. The team at the Wellness Retreat of Alba are just so switched on, and I'm privileged because they allowed me to have a say in what we put together and I wanted to put something together, that would mean that you could go there and you could enjoy all of the facilities that they have, including talking nutrition, meditation and yoga.

05:11

They've got a natural spring pool, walks, beautiful ambience, the area is just divine, but you're going to get the good advice as well. It's an eco-resort, so you're going to feel in a really good space. And just the fact that they allowed me the opportunity, to put it all together, so that you can go there and take advantage of it all, as you see fit. As I said, two offers, one is nurturing. So, it's a two night stay. And one is the Immersive and it's a 4 night stay. Absolutely reasonably priced. It's not over the top, but it is actually over the top in the experience. So, I've sent lots of people there, they've all raved about it. So, I hope you'll enjoy it. And please, if you've got any questions, just reach out to me at the website. [WhatAboutVietnam.com](#).

But without further ado, let's get back to the show.

06:11

Anders, welcome to the "What About Vietnam podcast", I'm really keen to talk to you about Huế. A city certainly entrenched in imperial and wartime history. Welcome to the show.

Anders Krystad: 06:27

Thanks a lot. It's a pleasure being here.

Kerry Newsome: 06:30

Let's start with the history and some of the history that relates to the architecture, some of the major attractions, some of the pagodas and monuments, etc. And maybe if you can talk to that, for my listeners, I think that would be really helpful. Just to give context.

Anders Krystad: 06:50

Yeah, let me take you a little bit into the geography first, because Huế is on the plane, from the mountain range around it, and out to the sea, it's about 50 kilometers, maybe a little bit more. These are all-- that plane is made up by sediments from the mountains over millions of years. And in prehistoric time, there were already people here, hunters and gatherers, there, we

found things that have been carbon dated for more than 50,000 years ago, so, people have been living here. Most of those people were, what we call ethnic minority groups today. The majority of the people in Vietnam being The Kinh, they're about 85% of the population. But they were living out on the plains in forests and have a lot of wildlife and fruit and an easy life.

07:52

Between four and 5000 years ago, the Kinh people, the Vietnamese came to the area. And once they started irrigating and doing the rice fields, all the wildlife went away. Meaning that these groups these tribes had to follow the animals and they went into the mountains. So, the French, called mountain people. And it wasn't necessarily a conflict between those who lived there before and the people who came after, but it certainly changed their life. And it's good to know that when you come here, this is not only about the last empire which lasted from 1802 to 1945. It goes much further back in history. "Montagnard"

08:45

The city itself, officially now there's 350,000 people living here, I would guess that number to be much higher, maybe around half a million people because there's a lot of people coming in from the rural areas to seek their fortune in the big city. And they don't report it. They don't tell the government that they've been moved from the rural areas to a city. But it still has a charming little, small-town appearance. And people in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh said that people are really lazy because they only work seven days a week. But there is a different atmosphere here than the one you find in Ho Chi Minh city or in Hanoi I think and that is one of the reasons I like it.

09:38

The river divides the city in two, so north of the river you will have the old citadel, which is the Old Town surrounding the Forbidden City, which was the home of the Emperor's, which again lasted for about 150 years. The placement of the Citadel and the Forbidden City was calculated based on two islands in the river. There was said dragons watching over the city. So, it's a lot of sanctuary and superstition about that. There are also previous, at least two previous citadels that are hundreds of years old, sorry, hundreds of years old. Because the Nguyen lords, they were here in the area already in 1600, in the 50s, when small town Hué was basically a trading town with especially the trade to towards China.

Kerry Newsome: 10:49

So essentially, there is a Forbidden City as part of the city, as we know as Hué. So, there is like an old part, which is the Forbidden City where the Citadel resides, is that correct?

Anders Krystad: 12:16

Yeah. And the whole of the Citadel has been surrounded by a great wall. And with moats in front of it, and also man-made canals on all sides, that water is actually also led into the Citadel and into the inner place in the Citadel, which is the Forbidden City.

Kerry Newsome: 12:36

Right. And then apart from that, out of the Citadel is the- for one of a better word, the old town of Huế, is that right?

Anders Krystad: 12:48

Yeah, and as I told you, a lot of it has been destroyed. There aren't many original houses left. If you compared to, for example Hội An, where they managed to save the whole Old time, we just have scattered all housings. And for the local people who live there, they want to tear it down and build something more than with a kitchen and a bathroom. And they're not allowed to. But they neglect the maintenance, hoping that it will fall down one day. So, we need to step up, we need to protect these treasures from history.

Kerry Newsome: 13:22

Yeah. And I think for people coming, I wanted to really distinguish that. So, everyone listening to when you arrive in a Huế you've got a split the township, I guess, into two, as in the Citadel, with the moats in there, and all the rest of it, that is the once Forbidden City. And then there is the old town which unfortunately due to, as you said, the war with the French and the so-called American war, it has been, I guess, existing in a state of disrepair since that time. Now if you were to pick out some individual places, in the Citadel, it's fairly obvious, but are there any particular pagodas or monuments that you think are standouts that people should definitely visit?

Anders Krystad: 14:21

From the Ming Nguyen Dynasty's period, all the Emperors are buried here in Huế except the last one, Bao Dai, he is buried in Paris. And all the graves are seen as national relics, and they're recognized by UNICEF, of course. But they are very different. Some of them are huge parks and grand buildings, some of them have been totally destroyed or neglected for a period of time which has made them into ruins. They are being restored but they are at least three that you have to see. And that is **Tu Duc**, which was the Emperor when the French came. And then you have **Minh Mạng**, which is kind of replica of the Forbidden City in Beijing, it looks very similar but on a much smaller scale.

15:28

So, if you at least spend the day to see those three, and the **Thien Mu Pagoda**. The Thien Mu Pagoda is a very important pagoda. It was built also to reflect the status of the Emperors in the Forbidden City, but it's on the riverbank about three kilometers to the east. There is a story about the Thien Mu Pagoda, that couples shouldn't go there, because there was a young couple that weren't allowed to marry. They were forced to marry someone else they didn't love, and they attempted to drown themselves close to that pagoda, and one of them survived and the other one died, and most Vietnamese will believe that, so they will- you will not go with your boyfriend or your husband or your girlfriend.

Kerry Newsome: 16:21

Right? Is that because you're afraid one or the other is going to jump ship or...

Anders Krystad: 16:27

It's bad news. It's bad luck. And yeah, you've been to Vietnam a lot. You know that that superstition about bad luck?

Kerry Newsome: 16:34

Absolutely. They take that as gospel. Absolutely.

16:46

Can you talk to us, Anders, about the...? They refer to it as the 'Perfume River' is that right?

Anders Krystad: 16:53

If you translate it directly from Vietnamese, it means "*The river of good smell*". So Hương isn't only for perfume or fragrance, it's also good smell. And it's a quite common girls' name. There's a lot of girls who are called Hương, because the parents thought they smelled nice when they were born.

Kerry Newsome: 17:15

Right, I know a couple of Hườngs, I'm now going to remember that. I didn't know that before. But I do know a couple.

Anders Krystad: 17:25

Girl's name in Vietnamese like a little poem. Like Về Thu Hương: Thi Thu Hương, Về Thu Hương means the girl or the one that goes to the market. Autumn, smells good. So, it's a girl that is born in the autumn and smells good. So that is quite normal with girls' names here.

17:43

The river: When it comes to Huế because this isn't that long, it comes from the mountains just some 20 kilometers inland. But it's quite majestic when it comes to the Huế city and it leaves out travels further or like 13, 14 kilometers before it hits the sea. And it used to be a lot of commerce traffic on the river bringing goods. But with the sediments increasing over the hundreds of years, the river became too shallow, and you can't bring big boats in there now at all. There is only these small tourist boats and it's a very nice way to see the river especially in the sunset, to go on the dragon boats bring some food and drinks and even if you can't afford it, rent some musicians that do the traditional music, put out the handmade lotuses with a candle to think about the people who have died on the river. It's a river that is in every Huế person's, how do you say, it's fear. They when they think about the Huế, they think about the Sông Hương, the good smelling river. The smell originally came from a grass that used to grow up on the riverbed. But that is practically distinct now because of pollution, pollution from agriculture, from sewage. Unfortunately, the grass is gone but it's kept in some private ponds so you can still actually go and smell it some places around Huế.

Kerry Newsome: 19:32

Does it have a fragrance?

Anders Krystad: 19:35

Absolutely. It smells good,

Kerry Newsome: 19:36

Right? Can you relate it to any other smells just so that people know,

"Yes, this is what he mentioned on the show."

So that when you go there like does it- Is it like licorice or is it like coriander or...?

Anders Krystad: 19:52

I don't know how to describe the smell, but it's pleasant. It's good and it's not like a woman who's been sloppy with applying a lot of perfume and it's too much. It's not like that at all. It's very pleasant and soft smell.

Kerry Newsome: 20:13

Right. But it's not like a spice or anything.

Anders Krystad: 20:16

No, no, it's not. It's not like distinct like lemongrass or anything like that.

Kerry Newsome: 20:23

Yes, that's what I meant. Yeah, that's what I was trying to get at. But it's a pleasant smell. So, you know, you're there in that pond. Once you smell that, yeah.

Anders Krystad: 20:33

And they say that, this actually affected the whole city, before I was in there. So, I can't vouch for that. But it's a good thought anyway, the river has been cleaned up, it's pretty safe to swim by now. And in the summer, you can.

Kerry Newsome: 20:48

Really, oh, that I didn't know.

Anders Krystad: 20:49

Yes you can go swimming there. It's also got a lot of fish. So, it's quite popular to fish along the river, fresh new pathways have been made along the river now all the way from the center, and all up to Thien Mu Pagoda. So, it's a beautiful evening walk, you will be joined by a lot of local people.

Kerry Newsome: 21:15

And as if you were to stay in Huế, would you look to try and stay somewhere near the river? Or would you look to stay somewhere near the beach, which would be your preference and let's talk about one versus the other.

Anders Krystad: 21:33

Okay, it depends on a little bit. I mean, if you really are a heat person, and you spend the whole day at the beach, you might as well live outside but there is not much done the beach and the seafood restaurants there's a couple of resorts, but **I would say that stay in the New City or south of the river.** But find a hotel that has got river view. There's plenty of hotels that have that, especially when the sunsets and you see all the lights over in the Citadel, you see the great flag tower on a sunny set.

Kerry Newsome: 22:11

Very pretty.

Anders Krystad: 22:12

Very, very pretty. Some of the hotels have like an open rooftop, with the bar and that's a perfect place for the sundown. Unless you travel a little bit up the river. There is a little mountain called **Vong Canh** mountain that has some old French and American bunkers on top of it. So, some people refer to it as Bunker Hill. And that is also a great place for sundown, and some of the tourist, agents they offer their Champagne.

Kerry Newsome: 22:44

Oh, that sounds interesting. What do they call it? Bunker Hill?

Anders Krystad: 22:47

Yeah, Bunker Hill on Vong Canh mountain.

Kerry Newsome: 22:49

That's interesting.

22:50

So, let's move into another aspect that Hué is traditionally known for and that is its food. And I really want you to expand on this because you and I both talked, and we said we both love food and certainly Vietnamese food. So, talk to us about some of the dishes that people should look out for. So, when they're going to restaurants or they're looking for what to order on the menu. Can we suggest some must tries and talk about food?

Anders Krystad: 23:35

Oh, absolutely. I think one of the reasons why the Hué is so diverse is because the Emperor demanded new dishes every day. So according to history, all the best chefs from the whole country were sent to create and invent for the Emperor. So, if you asked me about one signature dish, which will be one of the noodle soups, it's called Bún bò Hué, and you can eat it in different ways. It's a soft, rice noodle but with broth and of course the recipe for the broth is a family secret so you will never get anyone to tell us exactly in Hué. But you can have it with rare beef you can have it with boiled beef, you can have it with blobbed pudding. Personally, I like the rare beef.

Kerry Newsome: 24:24

Rare beef, yep, me too.

Anders Krystad: 24:25

Chicken is also okay. But there are hundreds of different local dishes and many of them are made from what we call wet cakes, which is mostly rice but this could also be cassava or a mix between cassava and rice. And they appear to be soft, medium thick layers of rice and it is wrapped around- it can be herbs with shrimp paste, it can be herbs with fried or grilled pork and there's a lot-- the common name for this cake is bánh. It means bread or cake. And my recommendation is not to go to the restaurant only based on the menu, but go and say- first of all, how many Vietnamese are there to eat? If it's packed, you're safe. If they don't have a menu, even better, because it means they have a very limited number of dishes. And it will all be fresh. The warning sign will be a restaurant that produces a menu with 100 pages, because that's simply mean-

Kerry Newsome: 25:37

Laminated.

Anders Krystad: 25:39

Copy fresh. It's not possible. If you go to--

Kerry Newsome: 25:44

That's a good tip Anders, which is really a very good tip.

Anders Krystad: 25:47

I've been driving around when I've been traveling in Vietnam with Vietnamese, we are looking for a place to have lunch and I say what about that place? Now there's nobody there. We can't eat there; the food is not good. So even though I have never been there before. So, I recommend if you want to start one, you better hire your friends to sit there and eat every lunch.

Kerry Newsome: 26:12

Don't I call that "Rent a crowd"? Yeah.

Anders Krystad: 26:16

But some of them are really old, you can find them anything from like trolley in the street, to a little hole in the wall, to the small chairs, to go out for the Vietnamese, to socialize is part of the meaning of life. We have a wonderful little word for it. We say đi náo, đi nhau (to go or do "nhau")- or meaning to go out, to eat, to drink, to talk, to tell stories, to sing, to drink some more, to eat some more and drink even more. And it can be pretty loud. And it can be pretty exciting, to--

Kerry Newsome: 26:54

Boisterous.

Anders Krystad: 26:56

But I simply love it. And that little word 'náo' it covers everything that is present in our lives, socializing with family or friends.

27:05

On this plane, at the end of the plane before the sea, we have Southeast Asia's biggest lagoon, meaning that we have a lot of seafood, both from brackish water from the sea itself and from the river. And it's a magnitude of different fish and shellfish. The best restaurants will have aquariums where the fish is still alive. And you go and pick yourself. And just make sure that they take the one that you have picked and put it in the box. It might be tempting, for example, instead of that fresh lobster to give you an old one if you don't pay attention.

Kerry Newsome: 27:49

Another good tip, make sure the one they pluck out of the water is the one they put in the pan. Yes, definitely, definitely. I know when I first started traveling and taking some people, etc., just for people to see them in the buckets. And that was a little bit confronting for some people because they couldn't see refrigeration and things like that. So, I think it was important to mention, and I wanted to kind of take time on that now is that they catch it literally in the early mornings. And they sell it during the day, pretty much, isn't it? And when they run out, they run out.

Anders Krystad: 28:31

Yeah, absolutely. And actually, a lot of the fishing, especially in the sea goes on at night. The fisheries will come in early in the morning and there will be shippers waiting for them and they buy up the goods straight both from the fish farms and from the fishermen themselves and it's spread to the various markets, to the wet markets. And some of these also been sold on the sidewalk so it's today's product. If they, for some reason can't sell it, I think they find ways to utilize it for their own family and so on but even in my local market, when they sit down with this little bucket in front of them the fish is still alive, it's fresh, yes.

29:22

Hygiene is always an issue here, but I've been living here for more than 20 years now, and I've been sick twice, the risk is relatively low but use your head, clean your hand don't pick up anything from the floor or...

Kerry Newsome: 29:37

It's just common sense mostly. I do know that some people do suffer with a bit of a tummy upset in the first few days of their visit. And a lot of that's just to do with I think some of the varieties of spices and the changes in the soil which the plants and In local produce is grown, that sometimes that's just a little bit richer than we're used to at home. You know, everything in our supermarkets here is kind of has been through several processes to get to us where, most of the food in Vietnam is extremely fresh, and especially in places like Huế and Hội An and townships, rather than big cities.

Anders Krystad: 30:27

My family, they would never go to buy a fish in the afternoon, because that is already not fresh enough, they always go out in the morning, and then bring the fresh fish or the shellfish home. And most Huế people, they eat, lunch and dinner at home. So they go home at lunchtime, and they also take the rest after lunch. So, you will find that like, for example, banks and public

buildings, they close hour and a half, maybe sometimes two hours in the middle of the day. So just get used to taking this.

31:09

On the other side, a lot of people go out for breakfast. So, it's quite common too, and I recommend any visitors, don't stay with the buffet in your hotel, go out and meet the people share the table and try to communicate, the level of English among most people in Hué is still quite low. But the young people love to chat. And they will seek you out and they want to sit with you. And they want to tell, and they want to share, and they want to learn. So, interaction through breakfast is actually a very good tip.

Kerry Newsome: 31:44

Because traditional to Vietnam, as I've understood breakfast is actually more important than dinner. You know, where in Western societies where everybody kind of waits for, the dinner meal to be the main meal. I think because of the climate. Also, it's cooler in the mornings. So, getting early, and if you want to have Pho for breakfast, you've got to get to some places really early because it's gone by nine or 10 o'clock. So, I think breakfast is a meal. And you're right about the young people because they're studying English. So, for everyone, don't be afraid to sit down. And some of the students will come and talk to you because they just want to practice their English with you. And they just want to kind of share what they know, learn something about you. And it's just a really lovely exchange and I find it everywhere. And maybe because I travel a lot solo, maybe they take pity on me, and they go:

"Oh! but talk to her. She's sitting, having her soup on her own."

But yeah, I agree with you. I think mixing with the locals is extremely important. And it just adds another level of enjoyment to your stay.

Anders Krystad: 33:06

When you stroll along the river here you are bound to meet some students who want to talk to you, and they offer to take you around to guide you and be your cue guides. They're not going to ask any money for that. They just want to practice their English and it's a lovely way to get in contact with the locals. And of course, if you happen to pass a wedding, and ongoing wedding, don't be shy to go in, that is seen as good luck. And you've been very welcome to sit down and drink and eat with the guests and weddings in Hué are big, if you don't have at least four or five hundred guests is laughing then it's--

Kerry Newsome: 33:46

And they're loud.

Anders Krystad: 33:47

Yeah, a bit loud, because it's also involved terrible karaoke.

Kerry Newsome: 33:52

Terrible karaoke. That is the only thing when I'm doing these podcasts. The only thing that's ever interfered with the show that I've recorded with anyone in Vietnam has been a wedding that decides to crank up next door. Like it's just so loud that you can't shut it out.

Anders Krystad: 34:12

The problem is it only last for two and a half hours and then they're all gone.

Kerry Newsome: 34:23

Can I move now to what time of year is a good time to visit Huế? because I think that's really important. Everyone wants to know, the best times of year. So, talk us through the climate and best weather and things to do.

Anders Krystad: 34:40

Yeah, from the Central, Middle, and North. It's four seasons, basically follow the European cycle, not the Australian one, meaning that the autumn and winter can be really, really wet. Especially Huế and Da Nang and Hội An, we can have November, December, January, I'd be careful. You can still enjoy Huế. you can still do sightseeing, but it's raining and it's raining a lot, for a little bit better control now with the flooding, we haven't had serious flooding inside the city for a long time. The last really bad one was in 99, where hundreds of people died. And most families lost everything, books and photographs. I've tried to find some pictures of my wife's family, but it's all gone in the great flood of 99. Personally, I love the spring here because a lot of the trees with leaves, they keep their leaves during the winter. But when spring comes, they drop the leaves, and they are green again within a week or so. And that freshness in the new leaves is absolutely fantastic.

Kerry Newsome: 35:06

So, we're talking February, March around that. And yeah, February, March, April,

Anders Krystad: 36:03

February, April, it can start to get hot already in April. But normally that comes in the summers, in May, June, July can be up to 40 degrees centigrade, but-- Celsius, sorry, it's relatively dry heat. And we very often have a little shower in the afternoon that freshens up a little bit and make the temperature drop. But if you want to go swimming in the sea or swim in the river, the water is pretty cold. Until May. I hate cold water. I don't go and swim.

Kerry Newsome: 36:40

Yeah, I can't do it either, no.

Anders Krystad: 36:44

And also, if you go up in the mountains, we have a great national park here called Bạch Mã. And they have some beautiful little waterfalls and the palm, really postcard style, but the water is freezing cold. Even in the summer. This is really strange; we can get temperatures up to certain degrees in the sea. But up in the mountains is still like 10, 12, 14.

Kerry Newsome: 37:16

Wanting to just address an abandoned park, it gets lots of images on Instagram and blah, blah, blah. So, we have to cover it off. So, is it Thuy Tien Lake?

Anders Krystad: 37:33

That's a good question. Because I don't remember what it's called.

Kerry Newsome: 37:37

You know the one I mean.

Anders Krystad: 37:38

Yeah, it's a huge area. And it was set up to bring more tourists to Hué, and it completely failed. When it was still open. I was there with some friends, and we just went there for a picnic, bringing some blankets and food and beers and that was very popular among the local people. But it's quite far out of the city. And so, people prefer to go to somewhere closer to where they live. I wouldn't go there at night, it feels a little bit scary, some of those--

Kerry Newsome: 38:12

Bit creepy? Yeah.

Anders Krystad: 38:14

But there are--

Kerry Newsome: 38:15

Apparently daytime, it's taken on a new life.

Anders Krystad: 38:19

Yeah, and you're not supposed to go in there anymore. Because there are some plans now to restore it or do something else there. I'm not really sure what's going to happen there. But there is a back way in, that all the local people know about, and you take your motorbike, and you can go around the lake, it's a big area. My guess is that they will try maybe to put some more hotels and resorts in there. I'm not sure.

Kerry Newsome: 38:46

It's about 49 hectares I read.

Anders Krystad: 38:48

It's huge.

Kerry Newsome: 38:50

If you can go with a Vietnamese guide, anyone who wants to go there, because the Vietnamese guide will then either find a way to get there without paying any fee. There isn't an actual fee, but sometimes a small fee paid to someone to look the other way to let you in is the way forward.

39:20

The train, now, I've got a couple of people who are keen to take the train to Hué and from Da Nang and do it through the Hai Van Pass. Can you talk to us a little bit about that because that's something that I'm going to do when I'm there in September this year. So, for some reason, I haven't got around to doing it. But I'd like to, if you could speak to that.

Anders Krystad: 39:50

The line is quite old. It was constructed by the French so it's twisting and turning and there's a lot of tunnels. But at the same time, it's one of the most scenic routes that we have going from the Da Nang to Hué, or the other way around. So, it goes relatively low close to the sea while as you cross the paths on motorbikes, you go up over the pass.

Kerry Newsome: 40:16

You're quite high. Yeah.

Anders Krystad: 40:18

I always say to people, if you're going both ways, take motorbikes one way and take the train the other way, the trains are cheap, but slow. There's major repair works being done on the tunnels, basically every night to keep it running. So, of course, there are some ideas about high-speed trains in the future that will be built more inland, but this little part of the old railway should be kept. Because it's simply stunning, some of the beaches and the mountain itself. Hai Van Pass means the place where sea and sky meet, it's very often covered with fog on the top. And sometimes when you go to the top of the pasture or above the clouds so that is also well worth seeing. And I think Tokyo Top Gear has an episode where they drive a motorbike over the pass. I think they named it the "Best motorbike trip in the world". And it's very popular to do that. Do both if you can.

Kerry Newsome: 41:25

It's just sometimes when you've got a family and you've got young children and things like that, I think the train is a great option. Because then you can be looking out of the window of the train. So daytime train is strongly recommended.

41:46

Just talk to us about accommodation, the styles of accommodation that are available in Hué for everyone. One end to the other.

Anders Krystad: 41:54

I would say it's far too many hotels. It's been an over establishment and very quickly, COVID set that back of course it still does. There's still a lot of hotels that haven't reopened yet. Even you can travel freely. The "Homestay" has become a new industry in a very short time, but when they say homestay, when you come there, there's nobody living there. So, it's not a homestay. It's just an Airbnb flat. But that could be nice. I think position is important. Make sure that they have convenient connections to the city center and to the sides.

You can find homestays and cheap hotels throughout the whole province. But you're not allowed to, as a visitor to for example, to go to Nam Dong and to all Hué, which are the border areas and stay the night without informing the police, because its border areas, ethnic minority

areas, and you're supposed to have a permit to go there. So, anything from-- of course, we have a lot of "nhà ở nghỉ", which is a guesthouse or a motel, some of them rent out per hour, besides not only to sleep, but most Vietnamese they need two and three and four generations in the same house. So sometimes Mum and Dad would like a little privacy and they use the hotels for that. In Huế, there are hundreds, if not 1000s of that kind of establishments. So, there's a lot.

Kerry Newsome: 43:28

So, these are, what you call them guesthouses. Right. I haven't heard that before. Okay. What's the Vietnamese name for it?

Anders Krystad: 43:38

Nhà ở, which means house and nghỉ, N, G, I. They are very cheap and some of them are really nice, they have been kept clean and they are well serviced, but some others have cockroaches. So, you have a look before you book, I think. Yeah. And you have the Two Stars, Three Stars, Four Stars and Five Stars and you can-- we have a beautiful one by the riverbank which is called [La Residence](#). It is this form of French- but now it's changed the name, **Azerai La Residence**, It is 100% article building that used to be the mansion for the French governor during the time of the French in Huế. But that is probably one of the most beautiful hotels that I've seen anywhere in Vietnam. They have a great pool there.

They have a great terrace with the restaurant and it's quite central. If you want to go high end that is a good one. If you want to go for the view, you have [The Imperial](#) which is 16 floors high, you have the new [Melia Vin pearl](#)., which is really, really modern. But half of the rooms are facing the wrong way. So, you can't see the river. So, I recommend you maybe if you want to stay a few days in Huế, book for one night first and then if you like it, you prolong your stay because we don't have a pressure yet from tourism. So, it's both negotiable and very easy.

Kerry Newsome: 45:24

Last piece of advice for anyone coming to Huế.

Anders Krystad: 45:28

One very clear advice, don't stay only one or two days, stay longer, we have so much to offer. I think the average just before COVID was that people stay 1.25 nights, meaning that it's nothing you just come and run around to see some of the sights and then you leave. It doesn't pay Huế justice to do that. It's the history. It's the ancient history. It's the imperial history. It's the modern history. The food, yeah. As I told you, there are hundreds of local dishes and there are some great food tours done by some of the locals So, planning a little bit more time. Or if you are the first-time tourists make the round trip and then have a plan B which is to come back.

Kerry Newsome: 46:24

Do that as you say that run around and then come back and spend some luxury time taking your time, and to breathe it in and do that. I strongly recommend that too. Really thankful for you to be on the show. Hope to see you in Huế, later in the year.

Anders Krystad: 46:41

Yeah, absolutely. You're welcome. I will see you there. Good luck with your show.

Kerry Newsome: 46:47

Thank you very much.

Anders Krystad: 46:48

Okay, bye.