



What About Vietnam – Hoi An in Focus- 10 Things to Love from a local's view and a traveller's return

Kerry Newsome: Xin chào and welcome to What About Vietnam. I have no doubt as soon as you start to plan your trip to Vietnam, the city of Hoi An is going to come up and feature very highly. There's lots of reasons for that. It's a big favourite for all new travellers to Vietnam. It offers the beautiful UNESCO World Heritage Site Old Town and it has beautiful beaches, and simply for the solo traveller, for the couple, for the family, there's so much to do. Today's episode is one close to my heart. We're revisiting one of the most loved conversations from our archives, originally recorded back in 2021 with my delightful guest,

Kerry Newsome: In the interview, you're going to hear Sharon mention Hoi An now. This was a helpful resource her and her husband built at the time that has since retired from operation. Sharon, however, remains a frequent visitor and true lover of Hoi An, and her insights into what makes this town so special are as timeless as ever. You've heard that old saying, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And while the episode still holds so much value, Hoi An, like all living, breathing places, has evolved. In my recent visit, I recognized some significant changes, but still a deep sense of wanting to keep hold of what makes Hoi An so unique. It's kind of hard to explain, I guess, but I'll do my best. As you'd expect, Hoi An just keeps growing in popularity. And with that, comes an international mix of travellers and a fresh wave of creativity, especially in the food scene. One of the best surprises for me recently was a dish called Barney Fur at Mam House. It was a kind of an accidental, just stumbled across place. Think of it as a clever twist on two Vietnamese icons. The crispy French style baguette of Banh Mi filled with the rich aromatic flavors of traditional pho. Add in the French chef who owns Mam House, his own fish sauce and pepper. Man, it was delicate,

bold and absolutely delicious. A snack that totally stopped me in my tracks. Definitely one to put on your list. I also had the chance to visit one of Hoi An's newest gems, Namia River Retreat. It's a stunning new wellness sanctuary that's really raising the bar here. With its riverside setting and mindful approach to well-being, it's showing that wellness in Hoi An is evolving beyond the usual spas and nail bars you'll see every hundred yards. It's absolutely a much more immersive experience, more connected to nature and the local culture. I'm going to be featuring Namia River Retreat in an upcoming wellness focused episode. So you'll want to stay tuned for that if you're looking for some recharging while you come to Vietnam.

As I consider myself a member of the slow travel movement, I'm still charmed by cafes out at the beach like Sounds of Silence and cute hideaways like Phin Coffee in the Old Town. You'll be spoiled for choice, trust me. That said, in the spirit of honesty and helping you plan better, it's also worth noting a few realities. With Hoi An's increasing popularity, especially with day trippers, tour groups, and increasingly a domestic tourist, backpackers, and traveling families, that rising demand has brought a noticeable hike in accommodation prices, particularly in high season. Where my favorite boutique hotels and riverside villas are still available, they are now asking at least 30% to 40% more per night. So, planning ahead and adjusting your budget slightly is a wise move. You're going to have to keep a more realistic viewpoint on accommodation and where you want it located. Even my original tailor is too busy to fit me in at the moment. Either that or I'm just becoming too impatient to wait in queues with stares from other patrons wanting the tailor's attention. Maybe it's just a sign of my old age or time to move on to others who do a good job and need the business. Watch this space.

There are lots of mixed emotions when we talk about over-tourism, especially in the ancient town. It can sometimes dampen the magic if you're not prepared for it. My advice, seek out the quieter moments. Early mornings are the best, definitely, and I mean really early. In the evening, the lantern lit streets are something a must do for people who are visiting. But you may find areas by the river a bit choked with crowds. The idea is to just go with the flow and make your way to maybe some quieter places overlooking the river with a bit more of a soulful feel. But they'll be just on the outer skirt. So keep walking. You're going to find them there, I'm sure, as I have. And when it comes to the beach, it's true that erosion has impacted parts of the coastline.

While An Bang and Cua Dai and still offer beauty and a really cool vibe, you may notice a thinner shoreline, sandbagging or more decking and built up beachfront spaces as businesses have just adapted. It's still beautiful, it's just different. Like any destination navigating its popularity, climbing prices and changing weather, like March was cold this trip and didn't really warm up till early April. Hoi An is working hard to balance that tourism with tradition. And that sometimes means progress is welcome by some but not all. And some parts as they go through it are a bit ugly and soul-destroying. But guess what? Hoi An's not the only place in the world that's experiencing that, so it's part of the story. What remains, and what I still love most, is that deep breath you take when you first walk through the ancient town. And when you're sitting by the Thu Bon River, watching the lanterns dance on the water, you have to remind yourself, where else in the world could you experience this?

So this is your updated Gateway to Hoi An. I've kept the original conversation with Sharon intact because I listened to it again and I was just reminded that her insights, they're just timeless and you're going to get a really good feel for that during the show. But I wanted to set the scene again for a new year, a new vibe, but the same incredible Hoi An.

Let's dive in.

Sharon Sweeney: Top of the list is Hoi An Old Town. I mean, I've never seen any place like Hoi An Old Town in all my travels. Basically, it's a heritage listed small town that is actually steeped in history. It's like a living museum, if you like. During the 1500s, it was the sort of epicenter for merchants who were going along the Silk Road. And so you had all these, I mean, amazing time, all these merchants from different parts of the world, like Japan, China, Europe, France, just everywhere and the architecture of the Hoi An Old Town is sort of reflecting all that melting pot of people and during the day it's just incredible because they've just maintained it so beautifully. They've got buttercup yellow buildings interspersed with pastel blue sky blue, baby blue sort of paint work as well. And it's just, it's just incredible. It's just so well preserved. And then at night, at night, it's like, it's like Disneyland because Hoi An is known as the lantern, the lantern town, and for good reason. Out of every shop front, there is numerous lanterns. There are lanterns along the street. There are lanterns overpassing the street. And my favourite time in Hoi An Old Town is where it's twilight. And you know that magical colour that twilight becomes? It's like pink and soft purple and orange, and they have these gorgeous sunsets. Anyway, and then the lights, the lanterns start coming on and oh my God, it's like this magical Disneyland experience. And then you've got this Tubon River that's just float, that just goes all the way through it. And on that, you've got these little Sampan boats that are just all adorned with the same lanterns, all colors of every imaginable color really. To see Hoi An at night like that and from the river is just, I mean, really. And just a couple of things, Hoi An is also a bicycle town and so there's no traffic as well that's allowed in the old town. So you can walk through it very nicely, but they have little traditions. And one that is very close to my heart because I've got a lot of wishes in me is, as we know, let's not dwell on that. Forget the wishes. So yeah, you go on, you can take a little trip on these sampan boats and you set this these little wish candles. You make a wish and you put them in a little, they're in a little sort of little cup if you like, little paper cup, and you light your wish candle and you watch it bobbing away in the water and hoping your wish will come true. So I mean you've just, everybody should see Hoi An Old Town just once in their life.

Kerry Newsome: I think absolutely and I think a lot of people have referred it to me as the Venice of Vietnam and it kind of is that and then I was talking to someone just the other day and they said you know if you didn't know better you'd think it was a movie set. because everything is so beautifully preserved, as you say, as in the old town buildings, all the shop houses and things like that. So I think you putting number one as a visit to the old town, either during the day and experiencing the markets early in the morning and the shop houses and having coffee somewhere really cute, checking out all the alleys, or as you say, at twilight, coming into the evening, watching the town lit up with the lanterns because there's some areas, as you say, are lit totally by lanterns. In other words, there's no light without the lanterns. And then, of course, there's the sampan boats and the wishes bobbing up and down and floating down the river. So, number one, I'm totally supportive of. I think it's a must-do thing. So for people listening, staying close to the Old Town is sometimes a

good idea. So it's an easy walk into town and I certainly would recommend that for first-time visitors to Hoi An because whilst Hoi An has lovely beaches as well. The feature of Hoi An is definitely that 16th century old town. So as close as you can get to it, I think is a good idea. Anyway, Sharon, what's your number two?

Sharon Sweeney: Number two is the other thing that I love very much about being in Hoi An is the close proximity of the countryside. There's something about being close to the land that I think we all need. Five minutes on a bicycle will take you into rice fields, rice paddies, or you can go a little bit further and you'll go into villages. It's, I mean, I've seen images of this, but I never really believed that Vietnam would have people wearing the conical hats, you know, the normal hats. I never really believed it, but they do. It's very much part of the headwear in Vietnam. And what I love about the rice paddies and the villages is it's like, again, stepping back into another time. It's like going back a hundred years because, you know, they plough the fields with water buffalo. It's really sort of like old world. And so there's nothing unusual about seeing a water buffalo just on the side of the road, meandering across the road. I mean, it can be actually a main road and you'll have cows passing. And so the countryside element of Hoi An, it just fills my soul. I can't, one of the most wonderful sights that still thrills me to my soul is when the geese or the ducks are going back to roost and you'll see them coming along a main road and there's about 200 of them all just waddling along with the man herding them along and people just go round them, cars go round them. I mean, where else?

Kerry Newsome: Yeah. Yeah, it's it's that's the sweetness. I think it's absolutely the sweetness of those simple things. And as you say, just to breathe in that beautiful fresh air, all those beautiful I mean, when you're riding through the paddy fields, it's kind of the only way you can get anywhere reasonably fast. And I think there's some people, may even be you, Sharon, that has jumped on one of those electric bikes, I think, to get around. Oh, you know what?

Sharon Sweeney: I don't know what the world is thinking. I'd never really come across an electric bike until I went to Vietnam and they're everywhere. And why do we bother with cycling when you can sit on it and go zip and off you go?

Kerry Newsome: It's their dream. Definitely, definitely a way to get around. So we're going to say bicycle around town is number two? Yeah, for sure. Yep. Okay, where are we up to? Number three.

Sharon Sweeney: Well you know Hoi An is equally famous for the heritage old town as it is for its tailors and no trip to Hoi An is complete without a trip to the tailor. You must get there. Where can a man get a suit made of high quality wool, a bespoke suit made just for him for \$100? And you can get that in Hoi An. You know, the tailors are on every corner. I actually have them on the website, my favorites, by the way, because what you can get is the top end tailors do charge quite a lot and they're not all that different to many of the other tailors. So you're paying a lot more money. And then sometimes it's a very hit and miss, but whatever the case, it's all great fun. And what I love most, don't you love this, is going into a shop and where there's reams and reams and bolts and bolts of all colored fabrics and types and silks and linens and choosing the fabric and then you go to the tailor and they'll copy something, they'll design something or they'll give you a pattern and it's addictive. It's so addictive and it's very, very cheap. So cheap.

Kerry Newsome: Very cheap and very quick. And quick. Like you can get a suit made in two days. You can get a suit made overnight, Kerry, if you go to the right feet. That's my love.

Well, I think they are a little bit more in the hit and miss variety. I mean, there's some tailors there that would slap your hand for saying overnight. But yes, those, you know, are maybe a little bit more yet select. I maybe would steer clear of those. We have talked about zippers not working the right way and things like that in the past but I'm addicted. I am definitely addicted to the tailoring as I've told you every time I've literally taken over my assortment of pictures from Pinterest or whatever that I like and I just say I want that one and that one and then also as you say wandering around those fabric markets just picking the exact material fabric, weight, style, etc. that I want, as I want dots or I want stripes or I want whatever, and just have it made exactly to what my body shape is at the time. Well I actually started to forget whether I was a 10 or a 12 or a 14, thank goodness because you know every time I went I just kind of got it made to what I was so that's a little bit tricky as well but fun as you say. Now definitely tailoring and there's 3,000 tailors in town so you might like to check you might like to check Sharon's website, Hoya Now, she's got some good recommendations there. But let's not get stuck on tailoring, let's move on to number four because we've got a list of ten to get through.

Sharon Sweeney: Yeah, well look, number four is I take my job very seriously and so whilst we have got tailors on the site, we've got something far more important in terms of the best and that is the spas, massages and spa treatments, you know, come on.

Kerry Newsome: Oh yeah, what a hard job you had to take so seriously, Taryn, to check those out.

Sharon Sweeney: We had to perfect it and it means going back to the same place, it means actually going to every place in Hoi An just to see what they're like and you know, and I do. So, I know, I know, I know, I'm a champion, but I do it regularly, yes. Well, look, at the prices, you'd be mad not to. I don't think anyone should go and have a one-hour massage when you can have a five-hour massage. I reckon you should just book yourself in for the entire trip, because I would. You've got the high-end, very high-class hotels offering massages. Now they cost a fortune and I've sent writers, reviewers, to the top really expensive hotels and it's very hit and miss and one would surprise you, I won't name it, but it's one of the best hotels in Vietnam and the spa treatment was very hit and miss. So again, no seriously, we do put very much a recommendation of the ones you should go to and Whilst you can get fabulous ones on the street corners, I mean, you can, because massage is an innate thing. It's not often something you can train for a good masseur. The ones I highly recommend are the day spas. And there you've got trained masseurs. They're cheap. The premises are clean. They're really, really tasteful. The decor's tasteful. You've got the full sort of Western sort of spa with the wafting music. The smells actually, oh yes, oh.

Kerry Newsome: You're sending me back there in a heartbeat, like seriously. That is one of the things as far as your trip planning is concerned, I would highly recommend to people to include. Don't, I think people always think they've got to be doing you know, doing all the time. And I think sometimes there is some pleasure and enjoyment in a holiday when you're just able to access things like massage and be able to just chill out, but not lie there thinking this is costing me a fortune. Yes.

Sharon Sweeney: No, that's right. I totally agree. But there's also there's one thing I was thinking of, too. One of the things that surprised me, actually, if not startled me, was that when you go to a massage on the street corners and sometimes in the mid-range and sometimes in the high range, The Vietnamese have a fascination, or they just don't really care, but they don't turn away or leave the room sometimes when you're undressing. And that took me, I mean, you know, I remember getting quite feisty about it and thinking that

they were trying to persecute me because I'd eaten quite a lot and felt fat, you know. And I didn't want anyone witnessing it, but they did. Just be aware of it. They don't mean harm. Kerry Newsome: No, but I think they like to check out that your bits, you know, your bits are white, like their bits might be slightly toasted. Yeah. But yeah, I think that's about the fascination. Yeah. Because I can remember actually the same thing happening to me when I first went. And I actually pointed to my arm and I said, yep, same, same. And she got it, like the girl really resonated with me and went, ah, yes, okay, yeah. That's what we're looking at, so move on. All right, after our spa, where are we off to?

Sharon Sweeney: Well, you know, this is, I'm not really a person that likes to do cooking tours, but the cooking tours in Hoi An are a must because it's not really just about the cooking. It's actually about the cultural learning about the culture and the cultural experience of the whole. So, I mean, I highly recommend a cooking tour. They have cooking tours for all types, so if you're a professional chef and you don't want all the bits and pieces of paraphernalia, then you can do professional, you know, cooking tours. You can do a cultural tour where, and it's great for kids, where they can go out and act like farmers. They actually dress you up as a farmer, you know. And you pick the vegetables and carry them in those round baskets.

Kerry Newsome: Very, very happy. And you wear those peasant clothes, you know, you get dressed up in that, in the stinking heat, looks fabulous.

Sharon Sweeney: And then you've also got other ones where you can get, you know, like everything thrown in. They like to throw everything in in Vietnam. You can get a basket boat ride, so they're the round modular boats. You can get a water buffalo ride. You can, well, you can get lots of things. You can even get a massage, which is great. Just thrown in. One thing though that is really good about them, and this is something that I would put equally number five if I had to choose another one, is they take you to the markets. And the market is the lifeblood of Vietnamese society. It's like we go to the shopping center, they go to the market, and it's a daily activity. It's not just to buy, it's to barter. They'll barter even though they know each other, because it's all part of the thing. And yeah, so I highly recommend it for the markets.

Kerry Newsome: Yes, definitely. And I think it is a very immersive experience. And I think what better way to understand a country than to experience it through its food. So definitely there, highly rate that as a number five. Now, what are we missing, Sharon? What are you up to now? Number six, yeah.

Sharon Sweeney: And that has to be one of the tools and one of my highest recommendations, it's on our top 10 on the website, is Marble Mountains. And it's set between Da Nang and Hoi An, about 20 minutes from Hoi An. And during the 15th century, second to 15th century, it was used by the Cham, it's during the Cham period, it was used by the people there as a sacred site of worship and it's got, it's really got one of those energies, it's amazing. There's five mountains and each one represents an element. So you've got fire, water, metal, wood and earth. And it's just amazing. There's pagodas there, which are like temples and shrines. You've got caves, massive caves that you can go down into. There's tunnels.

Kerry Newsome: Or crawling tunnels in very small areas. Hands down. I've seen some funny pictures where people are getting their bum shoved through. Me, me.

Sharon Sweeney: I really got, oh my God, I was scared. They can really, be careful. Yeah. Guides will grab you and they'll just shove you forward. And then the next thing is you're climbing into things that you could easily break your neck on. So just be careful of that, you

know. Good footwear. Yeah, well, good, yes. And beware of the heat. It's very hot. It gets very hot there. So just have to go early morning is the best during the summertime. And truly, I mean it because it's very hot. But when you get to the top, the views of Da Nang and all around are just simply, I mean, you're just going to lift your soul. They're breathtaking. And they're so good because they look over what used to be known as China used to congregate and it's such good bird's eye view of the whole city of Da Nang that the Vietnamese used to actually use it as a watchtower as well as a hospital during that period. So that's definitely, it's incredible. But I also love those marble statues at the bottom.

Kerry Newsome: You may see at the beginning of the show notes in the podcast channel that you're listening from, some words that say, text me a message. It's a great idea, don't get me wrong. I love hearing from you. And whether that's your thoughts on the episodes, some questions, messages of appreciation, I just love the feedback, it's really great. However, I feel it remiss of me to A, not thank you for them, but to B, not be able to respond directly to you. So, if you have sent me a question and I've got lots and you haven't heard from me, there's a really good reason why I actually don't have the ability in the technology to respond to you. They kind of expect that you would or I would answer the questions in the form of a show. And there's just kind of too many and I just think it's just too personal not to do it that way. So I wanted to alert you to the fact that if you do send me a message through that connection option, I'm not going to be able to respond to you directly. So if you do have a question, and it is time sensitive, or you wanna send me any kind of message, can I suggest the following two ways? One, send me an email to whataboutvietnam@gmail.com. That is the email address that I have the most constant access to, and I will aim to get back to you ASAP. Secondly, if you go to the website for the podcast, which is whataboutvietnam.com, if you scroll right to the bottom, there is a chance for you to leave a voice message. Now, in that voice message, I can respond to you equally with a response invoice. So, if you want a quick response, that's your next best way. But I just wanted to get this into the show, make you aware of this as it really is becoming problematic. And I've just got too many and I can't kind of go naming people and answering each question. That's just a little bit silly. So if you have sent me a text message before and you're waiting on a message back as a response, I'm so sorry. I cannot do that. But if you want to send the question again, I'd be more than happy to answer. Those marble statues are like the size of King Kong.

Sharon Sweeney: I think if you're in the market for a couple of 20 foot lions that you want to put in your backyard.

Kerry Newsome: Do you know, I can remember when they used to have just a few, just a few showrooms I think on the street, but now they line the street and I go who buys these? It's not as if you can like put it in the back of your taxi or your grab car on the way home. They are heavy, huge white kind of stallions that they, I always know when I'm nearly at Marble Mountain because those lined up of shops and frontages where all those statues are sitting out there show, yes, I already, I know, I go, oh, we're here. The marble is out.

Sharon Sweeney: Well, that in itself is a sightseeing tour. It's fantastic. But actually what you can buy, and I still will, is the marble chess set. So you've got like beautifully cut, carved marble chess sets that are about six inches to seven inches tall, each piece on a marble chess board. And look, yeah, you can get that shipped overseas, back to your hometown or wherever. Highly worth it. 300 bucks was the last I saw at the last count, yeah.

Kerry Newsome: Okay, so we've done Marble Mountain, number seven we're up to. Well, where are we headed now?

Sharon Sweeney: Marble Mountain is something that came onto the Hoi An scene about two or three years ago and I can't, I can't tell you. It's a show and it's outside and it's part of a theme park and it's called Hoi An Memory Show. and I'd heard about it and just thought oh I'm not going to that it sounds very glitzy you know not my sort of thing but I covered it for the website and my god Kerry it's a cast of about 300 It's world-class presentation. People fly through the air, there's music, there's lights, there's dancers, actors. It's all like water. Well, it's a real recreation of Hoi An and so you've got the Tuvon River, you've got the Japanese Bridge. The stage is water. Oh, it's just so cute and the stage is water and it's folktales interspersed with the history of Hoi An and it's sad, it's uplifting, it's just Oh, it blows you away. Those mechanical elephants that come on stage, you know, on the arena. But here you go, a little bit of a, little bit of a tip. We got, when I covered it for Hoi An Now, I got VIP seats, which was great. You know, I thought I'm set. And then I went again and I got the peasant seats, which is right down the front. And there, that's where you should be. You're right on this. amazing thing and it's just hard to explain but it's also part of a theme park that you go at four o'clock and that in itself, all the actors who are going to perform later are actually part of the sales assistants, they do mini shows, they serenade you, there's little historical things, little places you can go to learn about the silk trade and things like that, amazing.

Kerry Newsome: Yeah, it's a delight. I took my 16-year-old grandson and I thought, oh, you know, pretty hard to impress a kid of that age, you know, like he's going to think this is a bit, you know, and he just said I was blown away because also it's the contrast. You've just come out of a 16th century old town And then a little bit around the corner, you're stepping into this amazing theme park with this fully professional choreographed stage on water that is definitely up in the 20th century kind of level of production. And the contrast from one to another is just, you can't help but just be blown away by it. I mean, he said it's like watching the stage.

Sharon Sweeney: You opening to the Olympics, yes, that's a very good analogy, actually. That's exactly right, it is. Well, I just tell everybody, you must go because most people love, almost everyone loves Hoi An. I mean, the people are lovely. And to see a show like that, you just feel, I don't know, All warm and fuzzy.

Kerry Newsome: You do, swept away. You do. All right, now you're getting me very, very handsy for Hoi An now. But let's travel on. What are we up to? Number eight, I think. So what's your number eight?

Sharon Sweeney: Well, you know, it shouldn't be number eight, but it's hard to put them in order because there's so many good things in Hoi An. But it's the beaches. I mean, Kerry, those beaches. Sydney and parts of Australia, I mean they're beautiful beaches, they're so incredible, but so too are the beaches in Vietnam and I'm so surprised actually, I don't know what I expected, but you've got yellow expanses of sand, blue water, it's still, although it does get some waves, all you surfers out there, there are some waves, don't worry, but I like it still and it's still And it's warm and it's safe. There's no sharks or crocodiles. And what is something that we don't have? And I haven't seen this in many parts of the world, to be honest. is shade. These beaches in Australia are beautiful, but there's no shade. In Vietnam, all along the beachfront, there are either thatched huts or you have umbrellas and little tables and chairs and, you know, there's room for everybody. They're not crowded. Everybody can use one. And you get your little posse, as we say in Australia, you get your

little posse there. You order your cocktail. Oh, or you order whatever you want and you can stay there all day.

Kerry Newsome: Yeah, I've literally plot my bot, isn't that another Australian thing? God, that's terrible. But yes, but I have plot my bot down with a Diet Coke under a umbrella and literally just stayed put, put my headphones on, read my book for hours on end. I mean, if you go to Italy or places like that, they charge you about 50 euro just to sit down, just to have the umbrella. So, you know, and you're so right, the beaches are just divine. And what I love is the access to restaurants. They're sitting right on it, aren't they? I'm leading to that. Sharon Sweeney: I'm getting to that, Kerry, because that's coming up. But before I move on, I want to say this, that what you'll find is incredible. One of the things about Vietnam is it's so cheap and never forget that. It's a really nice part of Vietnam. But the other thing is the ladies that come and hawk on those beaches people get very I've seen some people get very aggressive with them try not to because actually these people are really nice people and they're just trying to make a living and I just people should just be aware because the Vietnamese are lovely people they don't mean harm and so yeah

Kerry Newsome: just think that they could be your grab. And they're not aggressive. They're not aggressive. They're not aggressive in any way. But I have noticed some tourists take umbrage to them coming around. But as you say, there's very few of them. Some of them are very well known to the restauranters as well. So they kind of let them come in and you know, for a very small amount of money, you can make a very big difference to those people's lives. Oh, you can.

Sharon Sweeney: And when you buy something, the humbleness of them, it's lovely.

Kerry Newsome: Okay. Now, up to number nine, we're nearly there.

Sharon Sweeney: We are. And it's moving on from your restaurants, because this is the other thing. You've told me, and you're quite right, that Hoi An has world-class restaurants, you've got all types of cuisine, beautiful Vietnamese, you've got Greek, Spanish, fantastic Italian restaurants, everything you can imagine. And I can't say that I shouldn't have this on the list, but the thing is that takes it out for me is having a meal in the evening with the balmy weather and overlooking the beach, and you have that beach, a beautiful stillness, and you can hear the waves just washing onto the beach, and you're there in one of the restaurants that line the beach, and I've got a few for different types. I'm just going to give some names, which I don't normally do. I don't like to because there's venues everywhere, but I'm going to do this. There's four types that I would recommend. For me, the all-out favorite has got to be Soul Kitchen, that I would recommend to a tourist, is Soul Kitchen. It's an iconic venue, it was one of its kind, and many have sprung up, but Soul Kitchen still retains its heart. Overlooking An Bang Beach, it's got live music, and these musicians are world-class. You can hear fantastic music, have food overlooking the beach and enjoy some drinks or whatever your fancy might be. and it's sunset, it's to die for. And you've got these wonderful little thatched, well, not little, they're quite big, aren't they? If you've got a party of people, aren't they nice? They're these hutch, like thatched little mini houses, if you like, with no walls, phantom. And the day beds.

Kerry Newsome: The day beds, yeah, we like them, don't we? We do. We do, who wouldn't? I mean, you can just take your shoes off. I know it's a naughty thing to do, but just to take your shoes off, be able to snuggle up on one of those day beds and drink it. And once again, as you say, I've never felt any impetus by the staff to say to me like, okay, you can move along now. Like you've been here three or four hours, it's time to go. Never have I been pushed out the door. And I can stay there easily an afternoon. And once the evening

comes on, as you say, with the entertainment, you're not charged for that entertainment. There's no entry fee into the venue. And just to linger there in that atmosphere is just divine, just divine.

Sharon Sweeney: And then you've got other places as well, if you're into nightlife you've got Cocoon (No Longer open), that's amazing, it starts at nine o'clock with a DJ. It's hip hop, yep. Very hip-hop. It goes till late, whatever that is, very hip-hop, very for the younger real party crowd. Yeah, they shut the doors so they cut the noise down. Yeah, and then you, well they do, yeah they do, and they make some noise. And then you've got Salt Pub which is very classy but it's also a pub atmosphere, combines the two, great for kids and yes great location for kids and then if you're in a really wealthy demographic then you've got Shore Club which is very high class but they all and there's there's others as well there's one by run by an Australian called Max Lambert which is for the basically for the backpacker crowd and I love going there but it's all they all overlook the beach and well, just don't miss them. Go to all of them.

Kerry Newsome: Yes. And they all offer, as you say, just something slightly different to each other. But as you walk past, you can pick a seafood restaurant, you know, and pick your seafood straight out of a bucket. You can move on and you can go to the H'mong Sisters and have a meal there. Or you could have a pizza next door. You go on to Soul Kitchen, as you say. Like, either left or right at An Bang Beach, there's just such a range. I totally agree with you. Yeah, yeah.

Sharon Sweeney: It's happening at An Bang.

Kerry Newsome: It's definitely. Okay, last but not least, number 10.

Sharon Sweeney: Well again, you know, I'm looking for the wow factor and I was thinking of all my time in Vietnam, what was one of the things that gave me this, ooh, wow. And that was, there's no doubt, it's the Hai Van Pass. And the Hai Van Pass is extraordinary. It's known by the Vietnamese as Deu Hai Van, which means ocean cloud pass, and that should give you an idea. You start off at sort of ocean level and you go up this mountain right into the clouds and you know it's a thrilling experience. There's a steep, steep drop the more you go. The roads wind and you pass these jungle covered hills, there's fishing villages below. It's just and then this view at the top it's just extraordinary and so that used to be the main way you got from Da Nang to Hue, which I highly recommend everyone visit. It was from Da DaNang to Hue. But now you can go another way, but don't go the Hai Van Pass. And if you can, go by bike, motorbike, but just beware. I recommend you go with a licensed bike driver because Vietnam has the highest death toll in the world or accident toll in the world with bikes. And Kerry, I don't know one expat, me included, my husband included, that hasn't had a bike accident. Some have been fatal, some have been nasty, and mostly they're okay. But don't take a chance if you're a tourist. You're more than likely not insured if you're on a tourist visa. Take a car. That's what I did. Or take a jeep. You can do that too.

Kerry Newsome: Yes, we can do a Jeep, we can do a bike. And I think definitely don't put that holiday at risk by riding a bike. As you and I both know, we've known tourists who've got themselves into some sticky situations because of that and you don't want that. You don't want that kind of trouble or that that thing to happen on any level. But certainly, as part of your trip, you just don't want any accidents or anything like that. So to minimise that, definitely. But you want the experience. You want that drive up there. You want that pinnacle view. It is just awesome. Absolutely. Sharon, I think we could go on to 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 easily. We could. I'm so, we could, we could. Hoi An definitely is up there as a big favourite with the tourists, so I know the top 10 is important because, you know, sometimes

the traveller doesn't have all the time in the world. So to narrow it down to the top 10 things that they should do as must-dos, I'm so grateful for you to share your top 10 with us. And I'm sure the travellers are going to be able to relate to a lot of them. and hopefully put on their list of to-dos when they go. It was lovely having Sharon on the program. I'm sure that you found her insights into the top 10 must-do things in Hoi An helpful. Hoi An does offer a great many things to do, so when you do start your planning, allow some time to be able to enjoy those things because it's certainly a city in Vietnam that you should spend extra time in because of those things.

Please reach out directly to whataboutvietnam@gmail.com for advice or if you wish a full trip plan to customised to you, we can do that too!.

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Thank you for listening

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