



What About Vietnam - S3-25- One teenagers views on a holiday in Vietnam

Kerry Newsome: 00:00

Ethan Sanders, welcome to "[What About Vietnam](#)" podcast. Lovely to have you on the show.

Ethan Sanders: 00:07

Thanks. Good to be here.

Kerry Newsome: 00:09

Well, we have talked about doing this for a long time. And I have thought, probably now was good because travel has opened up to Vietnam. So, whilst, for the last two years, it has been a closed door. Everybody is super excited because Vietnam is now opening up to tourism again. Now, I know our trip together was a while back, as in, you were just a 16-year-old lad at that time. And it was the year 2019. So, pre COVID, not much before COVID, but certainly pre COVID.

00:55

As I ask these questions with great interest to how you are going to answer them, because you have warned me that you are going to answer with great sincerity and honesty. So, I think that is going to be helpful for everyone, I hope, hand on heart. So, I will start, right in the beginning, when it was suggested to you that you would come to Vietnam, and you would meet me in Vietnam. So, before you went, what did you actually know about Vietnam? And were you nervous or did you have any kind of interpretations? Talk to us on that scale?

Ethan Sanders: 01:39

Well, I did not really have a huge mindset towards Vietnam. I did not really know heaps about it. Everyone, you get the occasional Instagram story that has like the frogs and stuff like that. And I was like, I was not really expecting that. But would have been funny to say that and all that. And yes, it was good, a little worried about the language barrier, and all that, with flying over by myself and stuff and getting there and not knowing where to go. And I do not understand stuff. And I did not know how I was really going to go. But it is good to have an open mindset going across. Turned out pretty good.

Kerry Newsome: 02:22

That is, actually the end of the story, but good to know in advance.

Ethan Sanders: 02:22

There is a path to it.

Kerry Newsome: 02:32

Yes, exactly. So, you have arrived into Hồ Chí Minh City?

Ethan Sanders: 02:38

Yep.

Kerry Newsome: 02:38

And of course, I am there to meet you at the other side. But what was your first impression of Vietnam? Like, what really smacked you in the face and said, "Wow, this is Vietnam." What was that?

Ethan Sanders: 02:52

It was probably the taxi drive. Well, as soon as I exited the airport, that intense heat wave that hit me in the face was probably the first thing. And then that taxi ride from the airport to the hotel. That was when I realized like, that was a shock. That was like, kind of everything came at me all at once. And I mean, it was not like scary or anything like that. It was just like a realization of like, "Wow, okay, I'm in like a fully different country and everything."

Kerry Newsome: 03:28

And like, you have traveled to other countries before. So, you have been to the US and places like that. But that cultural difference that kind of stood out for you. Like you were definitely in an Asian country for a start.

Ethan Sanders: 03:46

I could be like, because I've been to America and Australia. And there is some similarities there a little bit like, I could be standing in the street in America in a suburban area. And I could be standing in the street in Australia in a suburban area, and there would be a lot in similar. But in Vietnam, it is like, okay, I definitely am in Vietnam, like this is Vietnam. 100% Yes, that was good.

Kerry Newsome: 04:14

Did you find that kind of overwhelming? Some people just see the traffic and the motorbikes and they are quite like, "Oh, wow, I don't know how we are going to cope with this. Did you get that feeling?"

Ethan Sanders: 04:27

It was slightly intense getting over there. But it was like, this is how they live and it is a day-to-day life for them as well. So, it was pretty much like, I'm a tourist, I'm coming over. I am just going to experience that culture and stuff like that. And just go into it with an open mindset. And I mean, yes, obviously, when you are driving through the whole traffic area, and the car is like, on top of your car. It is like it is close, but it's like, it's okay because you know, especially if you go with family, you got someone to experience that or even if they haven't experienced that you're not by yourself, you know?

Kerry Newsome: 05:06

Sure, exactly. If I were to ask you like, what was the best thing that you would say about Vietnam? Like, you know, I talked to families all the time and I am talking to people and trying to give them some insights, share some ideas and try and make them feel comfortable about the idea of going that there is a lot to do. There is a lot to see for a teenager. Like what thing would you say about Vietnam, to another teenager that might be handy for them to know, or sort of might resonate with them more?

Ethan Sanders: 05:48

Yes. Well, I reckon, there is like so much to do, like, there will not be a time you go over there. And there is not something to do. But also, as a teenager, I maintain now, we all like to kick back and chill sometimes. So, I will say the hotel, hella cheap. It is really good. Really good. There is like bars in the pool. You can really chillax and stuff like that. And also, even with

experience and stuff that you cannot do, there is a lot of relaxing stuff that is actually like really fun to do.

Kerry Newsome: 06:24

And did you find the heat? Talk to us about the heat, we went in September. Because it was just 16th birthday. Describe the heat for people how you felt about that?

Ethan Sanders: 06:40

So, hotel was awesome with the heat. You get into your hotel, tell chill, and then you go outside, and you have that heatwave. It is not like unbearable. Like you can deal with it. It is just humid. It is a bit hot. And maybe carry a can of deodorant with you. But, besides that, it is not as bad as like a heatwave hitting your face. You can deal with it.

Kerry Newsome: 07:14

Okay. All right. So, let us just talk about we started in Hồ Chí Minh City. So, we had a couple of nights there. And then we moved on to Hội An. And we walked around the streets of Hồ Chí Minh City. And we went to one of the major markets, the Ben Thanh markets. Do you want to just talk about that experience at Ben Thanh Market?

Ethan Sanders: 07:43

So, we left the hotel and walking to the markets was a little intense. You know, you got the very wide range of street life that's kind of going on. And it is like, kind of non-stop movement, like, no one stops, it's, go, go, go, 100% of the time. And you are trying to move through that which is a bit of a maze, but you get through it at the end. Yes, the markets were awesome. They sold everything. Do not go to the fish section at all. Do not go.

Kerry Newsome: 08:30

Why not, Ethan? What is wrong with the fish section? Talk to us.

Ethan Sanders: 08:34

Well, as I said, it is hot and then you mix fish into that. No, it is not bad. Do not even go past it. Just like really avoid that area. Unless you are okay with the fish smell.

Kerry Newsome: 08:50

All right, so we managed to get through that. But you were definitely noticeable in markets.

Ethan Sanders: 09:00

Yes, I do have red hair. Like you pointed that out. Yes, we did get occasional stares. Almost I think, I was about six feet back then. So, it was like a walking giant with red hair. So, it was not hard to miss.

Kerry Newsome: 09:18

Yes, there was a definite novelty factor. Therefore, a lot of people and you certainly had the height, so you could kind of see above all of them. And there was not going to be an easy chance of you picking something off a rack to fit you. You were six feet. So, we moved out of there as I could see the maybe some of the aromas or color aromas not appealing to you at all. So, we had that very short, like in out, but then we went to an ordinary mall, didn't mean?

Ethan Sanders: 10:04

We did.

Kerry Newsome: 10:05

Except for the fact that there were not many shoe shops with your sizes in them.

Ethan Sanders: 10:10

Yes, there, we could not find one shoe shop that had my size in it. I am a size 13. So that is generally a pretty big shoe. But yes, it was like this is not built for my size.

Kerry Newsome: 10:28

Exactly. And that's kind of important to note. Because a lot of us are not that small, as in the size that the average Vietnamese would be. So, for a Westerner, thinking that you are just going to automatically get sizes that fit you may not be the go. So, we moved on from there. And then we headed to Hội An. So, do you want to describe for people, your view of Hội An and that hotel that we stayed at?

Ethan Sanders: 11:03

Yes, so Hội An wasn't really massive on the skyscraper kind of side of things. It was more hotels and was more like suburban. And it was a little bit suburban kind of. And that was nice. It was kind of what my view of Vietnam before I went over was, and it was more open. It was nice. Yes, it is good.

Kerry Newsome: 11:34

Do you recall the Old Town side of it as it almost looks like one's kind of created this scene? Because it has so much history attributed to it. And it is still intact as the old town.

Ethan Sanders: 11:53

It was really awesome how they kind of held that history with how they moved forward with it. And that did hold a lot of it. There was like, honestly, no matter where you look, there was something historical. Yes, took you back. It was good.

Kerry Newsome: 12:07

If you had to recall an experience or a lasting memory that you want to share with us. We were able to spend three or four days there and we did some of your chilling that you mentioned by the pool, in the pool.

Kerry Newsome: 12:33

Absolutely has to feature, definitely. So, there is plenty of that. But do you have an experience that we did together that that you would like to share, and be nice this is your chance, Ethan.

Ethan Sanders: 12:49

I got two experiences. So, I will start with the less embarrassing one. The food tastes, we went to a cooking, like we got to make food and stuff which was really cool because we got there on a boat and then we got onto the back of a cart with a... What was that animal called?

Kerry Newsome: 13:15

Buffalo.

Ethan Sanders: 13:15

Buffalo, that is the one. And then it took us all the way there. That was an experience just like getting on the boat and then the Buffalo and then we had the hats and everything. Honestly, if you go, you have got to got to embrace, just do it as bad, as embarrassing as you think it is. It will be an experience you will remember for life. It is honestly the best.

13:38

We made a bunch of food, which was awesome food. That was honestly, the best food. I honestly think of Vietnamese food before I went over. I was like. I mean what teenagers hell of veggie with it, you know, we do not like vegetarian stuff. And I mean, if you do, you love Vietnamese food. But honestly, the way they mix their food, just is awesome. And they showed

us a bunch of cool ways on how to make that and the people were honestly the nicest people ever. And we had a bunch of laughs with them, which was good.

14:18

Then the second experience was Marble Mountain. We got off of the taxi on the way there and the mountain is like a bunch of marble everywhere. I mean, it is called Marble Mountain, you would not expect anything less. It is huge. We had a choice to either go up the elevator or the steps. And we pick the steps. That is why, it is one of my experiences. [laughter]

Kerry Newsome: 14:54

It was a very hot day, I wanted to remind people.

Ethan Sanders: 14:57

It was a very hot day.

Kerry Newsome: 14:59

And it was still 8 o'clock in the morning?

Ethan Sanders: 15:01

Yes. Well, to give you an example of how it was. The end, like last route up the stairs was called Heaven's Gate. So, it was up there, and it was hot as well. And the steps were not very aligned on the thing. So, you had the occasional massive step. And then the occasional tiny one, but majority were massive. Went out there, they showed us all the historical things and some of their culture and religion and stuff like that, which was really nice. Gave you a good view, and you could tell how that related into that people as well. And then we got to Heaven's Gate, which was awesome.

Kerry Newsome: 15:52

I cannot believe you are being careful, Ethan.

Ethan Sanders: 15:55

I am getting a stare of death. They are like...

Kerry Newsome: 15:58

Oh, not true!

Ethan Sanders: 16:01

Then we got to the top, like, sweaty as hell, not a hell a bunch of water. So, we are kind of borderline dying at the top. I mean, this thing was like, it was up there. Like, even for a teenager and everything that was hot. That was difficult. And then got to the top of Heaven's Gate, sat there for about 10 minutes, just preparing ourselves all the way down. It was a good view at the top, so why not? And then we slowly proceeded to take our way down to the bottom of the hill, all the way down the steps, which was good. It took us a bit.

Kerry Newsome: 16:48

Yeah, I think for everyone listening, you need to kind of get a visual on this where my grandson is trying to get his head around the fact that I'm not navigating these steps particularly well, because I'm exhausted. I have not done this for a long time. And there is something about the heat on the marble, which makes them kind of slightly damp and slippery, quite slippery. So, Ethan is having a laugh at my expense, about my inability, that he is not used to seeing me try to navigate these steps. So, along the way, I was getting lots of jabs about that. And feel the need to get back into my fitness.

Ethan Sanders: 17:41

Good jokes. But it is fun.

Kerry Newsome: 17:44

Yes. So that was great. But one of the things if I could add to the story, was you saying to me, "I think the best part of this is that there is an air-conditioned car."

Ethan Sanders: 17:59

We had the taxi drop us off, he stayed there the whole time. And then we came back, getting into that taxi, honestly was amazing. It was the best thing ever.

Kerry Newsome: 18:16

Yes, we were pretty hot and exhausted after that and in hysterics, after the navigation down the mountain with yours truly, let us move on from there, Ethan.

Ethan Sanders: 18:31

Wait. You know, when you have been talking to someone the whole time, and then you are so tired. When you get into the space of relaxation, and you do not say anything. It is just dead silence of exhaustion. That is what that entire taxi ride back was.

Kerry Newsome: 18:50

Yes. I had visions of the swimming pool at the other end. And that was all I could focus on was me diving into the water. Maybe not even coming out the other side. Yes, now I am with you.

Ethan Sanders: 19:05

I am same.

Kerry Newsome: 19:06

Can you put your headset on for a moment, if you will, just to think about maybe other younger people, kids, etc. coming to Vietnam, is there anything that you would warn them out about or give him a heads up about to say, don't let this kind of do your head in. Just go with the flow or I do not know, I do not want to put words in your mouth. Are there any things if you are talking to your mates to say, if you are going to go to Vietnam, what would you say? Just to warn out.

Ethan Sanders: 19:46

Honestly, just have an open mindset. Honestly, just do it. Have fun. Yes, you will embarrass yourself as hell but it is so fun. Like if you just got in the heat. You do not feel it. If you are doing stuff like if you are doing something and you're concentrating on something else, you will not feel that heat at all. And honestly, just have it booked out before you go. Maybe do not do it and just try stuff, look up some stuff and research a bit before you go over, of course. And then, but honestly, once you get that, if you just have an open mindset towards everything, as much as you will get embarrassed and feel like an idiot, you will have so much fun.

Kerry Newsome: 20:31

All right, I want to speak to a little bit about the beaches. And I think, we went to a really nice beach cafe, if you recall, that was right on the beach. So that was out at An Bang. Do you want to describe the setting? It was very relaxed,

Ethan Sanders: 20:53

It was very relaxed, open space, it was honestly, trying to find it was a little bit but as soon as you found it, it was like in this little, it is like going through a little door and it opens up to a huge, awesome space. And it had an awesome bar. And plenty of drinks there as well, which would be great. Now, I am older than eighteen which is good. I do not 100% go back for that. It is like, even in Hồ Chí Minh, and in Hội An is like party central. Honestly, it is like you are going to have a good time, especially as a teenager. And it is really cheap as well. We will get

drinks for what we got a coke for like \$1.50 or \$2 or something like that. It was honestly, like you could have so much fun for so little amount of money. And honestly, it is memorable and the beach was awesome. It was an awesome view. We had the city on our left, and then down the rest of the beach and we went down onto the beach, you could walk on the beach a bit.

Kerry Newsome: 22:03

It was hard to compare, isn't it? Because you live in Sydney and to try find the an exact comparison, there really is not one.

Ethan Sanders: 22:14

You really could not find, no chance of that.

Kerry Newsome: 22:19

Big question, I guess, to just wrap things up with you, Ethan. Would you recommend Vietnam as a holiday destination for teenagers?

Ethan Sanders: 22:30

100% for teenagers. If you embrace it, you will have a good time. And yes, 100%. People are the nicest people. I promise you, if you go there, you will have fun.

Kerry Newsome: 22:44

Okay, and last question just to wrap this up. Because you are now two years old. So, you are eighteen legally. Do you think you will go back and if you do go back, what would you do differently? Or what would you add on to it, do you think?

Ethan Sanders: 23:05

I 'd go Hồ Chí Minh and Hội An. I would do the exact same how we did it in Hồ Chí Minh to Hoi An. And I have noticed in Hồ Chí Minh a very wide range of club and bar life. So, I would definitely check that out heaps. Especially, because I can drink and all that now, so that would be awesome. And because the hotel that we got there was really good. So, I can like go out clubbing bars and then come back, and I would like chill time as we all think 18-year-olds enjoy. 100% go back.

23:48

Honestly, I would still experience the stuff that we did, because of course you do not need to be hammered to have a good time. Especially, the food making, Marble Mountain, it is really good with mates. I know for a fact; I would have 1000s of laughs with my mates just to embarrass each other. And even with parents or just as a teenager with, honestly anyone, I personally would not go by myself. I would invite a mate or go with someone only because it is a lot more fun and it is just good to have someone there that you know as well. It is not as overwhelming. Yeah, I would 100% go back just for the nightlife. I would go back just to have awesome times with mates and other family and friends and stuff like that.

Kerry Newsome: 24:44

Okay, do you think you might check out some other places like maybe go north into the mountains and higher up?

Ethan Sanders: 24:52

I would 100% head around, check out some new spots, like definitely do my research before I go over and if I am, seems like some cool activities and stuff that I can, whoever I'm with would enjoy with me. I would 100% check those out.

Kerry Newsome: 25:08

And you might even know somebody who does a podcast, who you happen to be related to, might be able to help you out.

Ethan Sanders: 25:16

I would probably start here for research, honestly.

Kerry Newsome: 25:22

That was the right answer. That was definitely the right answer. Thanks, Ethan.