



## What About Vietnam - Series 2 - 3

### Is Vietnam a Family Friendly destination?

Kerry Newsome Newsome: Xing Chau ,and Welcome to What about Vietnam? Today we tackle a question that comes up a lot. Is Vietnam a family friendly country, and does it cater to kids? I'm lucky today to be putting this question to my well traveled guest, Suzie Slingsby Slingsby.

Suzie Slingsby's had the privilege of traveling over many years, working in the financial services and the travel industry. And while she's a busy girl, as she is a board member for a local credit union, I caught up with her in Lennox heads Australia.

We had a good chat about her visits to Vietnam and how much she loves the country. Suzie Slingsby has a beautiful daughter, Bella, and as a family they've traveled to Vietnam several times, and she says, There's really good reasons for that. I'd love you to welcome Suzie Slingsby to the program.

Hello, Suzie, Welcome. To What About Vietnam?

Suzie Slingsby: Thanks, Kerry

**Kerry Newsome:** Look great to have you on the show for many reasons. As I know, you're a very well travelled person and certainly done are few trips now to Vietnam. I know you also travel with your lovely daughter Bella, who I think has got a birthday very soon. She's coming up to eight. That is. Oh, God, That time went quick.

You know, when people think about Vietnam, possibly their first thought is not to think about it as a family friendly or kid friendly destination, But I'm glad to hear you think otherwise. So tell us a bit about why you do think Vietnam is a family friendly destination and maybe give us some tips for our listeners.

**Suzie Slingsby:** Sure thing. I think there's one of those things with Third World countries where sometimes people think they're a bit apprehensive about taking small Children there. And I suppose certainly some countries we wouldn't take hours to other. However, I mean, Vietnam, for us, has always been one of those places since the first time we did take Bella, was you know, what's not to love about it. You've got good weather, amazing food. The people are friendly.

It really gives them a good introduction to different cultures in a really safe environment. And I think you know, my daughter is probably not dissimilar to a lot of others that sometimes they need a good dose of gratitude. I guess I'm thinking of how other people live in very different circumstances. It's a good experience with some really fun stuff for them. It's a really good learning lesson,

**Kerry Newsome:** I think you're right. I think opening Children's eyes to another culture and just seeing how the other half live is a big thing. I know I took my grandson last year and I thought, Gosh, even just getting him away from a device was going to be a challenge. But he just embraced it. I mean, how do you think Bella goes? Does she? Does she love it? Does she get really into

**Suzie Slingsby:** She does. She actually tells everyone her best friend is in Hoi An now, which is quite humorous because she's only met this little girl a couple of times. However, and apparently it's her best friend, Um, but she enjoys every time they see each other, and while the girls doesn't really speak any English, that's pretty great. But those two can play for hours and have a really good time & somehow they speak a language that they both connect and have a great time together.

Kerry Newsome: I think you've been there about three or four times. Do you think It's kind of grown up or adapted to the foreigner to bring Children and made it a little bit safer and a little bit more family friendly? I know they've got a lot more attractions that cater to Children these days. Do you think?

**Suzie Slingsby:** Its changed? Yeah, I think the last couple of trips I've noticed that, you know, with some of the theme parks and you know, some of the facilities that are a bit better for Children, as well. I mean, the people have always been very friendly, and that's great. I suppose the only thing for me that hasn't really changed is probably the traffic, but your Children get used to it. I think that's probably the scariest thing about our trips is, you know, trying to cross the road. Particularly in Hanoi. But I think the more you go on, the more they're exposed to it and they get a bit of common sense about it. They understand it'll work. I think Vietnam is doing a good job of trying to have something for everyone. And Children are definitely getting catered for in that mix.

**Kerry Newsome:** I definitely agree. So do you have any kid friendly advice for parents; things they need to just be aware of? I mean, sometimes the food is an issue sometimes. As you say, it's the getting around bit or getting across the road bit. But you know, any advice for parents traveling with families that would be useful?

**Suzie Slingsby:** Well, I think you know, our daughter can be a picky eater at times, that's for sure. But we never found a meal where we thought, Hang on. There's nothing here she can eat, whether it was, you know, chicken fried rice, or whether it was something that they had catered for, um, you might. You will find a lot of places have Western food as well, if that's what you want.

But there's not too many kids that wouldn't eat rice or a spring roll or chips or something like that. So we didn't have a problem with food. There was also, like some really fun treats as well, like in the night markets where they make hand rolled ice creams and things like that they love.

That was the highlight having those things. And they're actually not as naughty as the treats that we have at home. So good to know someone. That's my excuse, because I was eating them as well. But they have this delicious food everywhere.

Kerry Newsome: I know when you're talking about the night markets. I think there is, uh, there's one that kind of has this Effervescence that comes off. Did you see that one? I know my grandson tried it and, you know, like I think he had that brain freeze. He got brain

freeze because it was so cold. But because it was so, you know, the evening was so hot. You know, it was like he said, "I'm still eating every drop of this because I want to cool down". And I went OK, go for it.

**Suzie Slingsby:** Yeah, it's a bit like that Liquid nitrogen you get in the nice hotels, But you're buying it on the side of the road with bits of fruit. So I did have a few pieces like, Oh, well, yeah, but that's all part of the fun, isn't it?

Kerry Newsome: It is. It's all part of the experience. Exactly.

#### TOP 5 THINGS for KIDS

**Kerry Newsome:** So does Bella have a top five things to do?

**Suzie Slingsby:** I did actually ask her to give me the top five off some of her trips and some of them surprised me and may be hard to get across the board for a lot of people.

#### **RIDING A BUFFALO**

Find this fun right at the top of her list was actually riding a water buffalo. Um and it was I would not have gone. I would not have guessed that at all. Well, let's just say the video of me on the water. One buffalo has been deleted, but I would say that is quite a good one for all ages.

#### **SIDE CAR RIDE TO TAM KY**

Um, but somehow Gary found this sidecar company where you can actually get the motorbike with the sidecar. Now, I was quite nervous about this because I'm a bit of one of those careful girls, when it comes to safety all the time. And I was like, it was just gonna be safe enough. However, we all had helmets. We had the three of us on the bike. So Gary was on the back behind the driver, and Bella and I were in the little sidecar. We had a motorbike that was like the guide who was in front of us for the traffic. So it was a really nice adventure, and they took us out through the rice paddies and we somehow ended up where these water buffalo were, and we all got out and they had a man on the water buffalo. And one by one, we all had a ride through the river. So it was remember a with buffalo was right up there.

#### **THEME PARK - VIN PEARL LAND**

There was a theme park called Vin Pearl Land and it was just out of Hoi An on the way to Tam Ky, and you turn up and it's like a Disneyland, but with very few people and for about 1/10 of the price, I can't remember exactly in my mind, I'm thinking about \$30 or something. It was not expensive, not expensive. There was zero lines we thought. I think at the time we went there, she might have had have been six or five. I kind of remember maybe six on. We thought all a couple of hours, and we'll leave, but after 8.5 hours we had to go.

The hotel was actually ringing us up to say, Do you want the driver to come yet? We had to drag her out of there. But they had everything. There was a water section. There was a zoo like the headline from Jurassic Park. Yeah, it was amazing. So we're feeding giraffes, then we had the roller coasters, then they had also I'm not a gaming huge gaming fan, but included was this indoor gaming center fully air conditioned? So if you need to escape the heat, the parents could sit in there, um, and have a drink, and then they can play on some stuff. So that was a huge day.

#### **WATER PUPPETS**

We believe it's on in a number of places. But we did see that in Hanoi, and that was really spectacular, actually. And it's, I think they're beautiful. I highly rate them, and it is back to

the olden days of it, isn't it? It's not the most over the top production, but it was really well done. And she said that was very high on her list.

### **LANTERN MAKING**

Next one is very random. Um, she did some lantern making and really enjoyed that. They so Ah, lovely lady in the night markets. Well, actually, not in the night markets in the old town. I think she was um and she had a beautiful stall, and so she would teach the Children how to make lanterns, and they could keep, um and I suppose, on the making theme. Another thing that Bella said in the same breath was there was a place where you could get little stamps made and you could get stamps made of yourself or of your teacher or anything that you wanted, you could just take Wow. Thanks. So that gives, you know, some idea.

Kerry Newsome: I think I know where the place, it's in Hoi An.

### **BIKE RIDING**

Another thing to really enjoy was bike riding. We used to do as a family. As we've said, the traffic could be rather hectic. But bike riding is definitely the way to get around in a lot of places. So we'd get up early in the morning, get on our bikes in whatever shape and form they were. Um, and luckily, the hotel in, um, Hoi An had good bikes, Thank goodness. And all the brakes work, so we would go out cycling down the road. She thought it was quite hilarious watching me on a bike, ha! We would go exploring out with the villages and go on to have coffees. And that was the highlight of the day, I must say, that was really nice.

Kerry Newsome: And there's those little tracks. The only way you can get on those tracks and go into the paddy fields and, you know, really experience the local farmers at work like they've done for hundreds of years. The only way you can really do that is on the little bicycles. Some are motorized. Have you seen the motorized ones?

Suzie Slingsby: I was sucked into the good old fashioned pedals. That was really good, but I mean, it just seemed there's so many things that was actually quite hard to get her top five because there's so many impressive things like the That IMPRESSION SHOW OR MEMORIES SHOW

### **HOI AN MEMORIES SHOW**

**Suzie Slingsby:** That's another point about the memory show. Yes, and there's thousands of people in that production. And you think it's spectacular. It's not expensive. It's such a show. And you think, Where else could you go and see all of this for this price? That was That was in there as well. But that's sort of around at her top list.

**Kerry Newsome:** Okay, that's fantastic. Okay, so just to finish up our session, Susie, uh, you know, just on, I guess, if you are preparing for a trip. What would you say is a good length of time?

So you can fit everything in and do everything you want to do in a good space of time. How much time should people allow, Do you think?

### **HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD YOU ALLOW?**

**Suzie Slingsby:** Well, I'm one of those people that likes to withdraw on your holiday, and I know it's not a huge, long way to go, but I would think you probably need two weeks at least, because don't forget, depending on the time of the year, it can get really hot and your kids can get really exhausted. So we always made sure there was a part of the day where we were just swimming by the pool on, depending on the heat of the day, whether it was riding or whatever.

But, um, I said, That's a top tip as well. Make sure you have a pool because you will definitely use it a lot. Um, and it's nice for parents. Have a cocktail by the pool while the kids having a good time. But I did find, um, one time we were there in July, when its very hot. Bella was exhausted. We'd go out and do something for a couple of hours, and then she was actually sleeping during the day. She was just so exhausted. So just make sure you give yourself time. But I wouldn't rush it because there's so many places to see.

**Kerry Newsome:** Thanks very much, Suzie, it's been great to have you on the show. I look forward to talking to you again about maybe some other experiences and exploits that you've had in Vietnam.