



## **S5- E11 – Out & About in Hồ Tràm Vietnam**

**Kerry Newsome:** Xin chào and welcome to What About Vietnam. So today here we are in Ho Tram and this is the second installment in the What About Vietnam series which I'm kind of calling Out and About and Out and About is today in Ho Tram. Now, Ho Tram is a very small beach town located in Vietnam's, now you're going to kill me with this, I'm not going to be able to pronounce it correctly, but it's Ba Rai Vung Tau province. And it's kind of situated about 125 kilometers southeast of Ho Chi Minh City. Now, the purpose of this episode is to look at the situation where you're going to choose a hotel as your location. Not a city, not a township, not an adventure. You're not going to go hiking, you're not going to go caving. You're going to come to a hotel. And I did an episode back in season four, episode 18, where we featured luxury brand experiences in Vietnam. And I did that with a lovely luxury expert. And she was able to share with me some places that she said, you know, you just go there the hotel. You don't go there to do anything else but to experience the hotel.

The hotel is the place, it's the destination, it's the location. So today I'm joined with my partner in crime here, Kelley McCarthy, and I was able to ask her to come with me to do this together so that we could share and compare how we viewed this kind of experience. I'm sure you're going to get a bit of a giggle because she's all about giggles. And definitely I think some ideas because I think for most people they are short on ideas for about a two hour or

three hour venture out of Saigon. Like typically those would be Mekong Delta, Ben Tre or out to Can Tho. So this is an alternative, but this is five star, so I'm going to ask my five star girl to join me here. Hello Kelley McCarthy.

So here we are girl, we need to maybe give everyone a bit of a heads up into, let's tell them how we got here, as I think you might be the best to just recall that little trip.

**Kelley McCarthy:** So our little adventure started when we left Saigon You can arrange with the hotel to use the courtesy bus that will bring you out here, which is a great saving because it's probably 1.5 to 2 million each way if you were to arrange transport, so it's a great little bonus in your package and You just book in advance you're out there and return. My suggestion will be get on that bus a little quicker than we did and don't think you're cool by going to the back. You end up sitting over the two back wheels which means really you should bring a kidney belt to hold everything in place as you bounce up and down on the great little roads out here.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes, there was a few twists and turns there and we did, you know, we're the type that just go to the back of the bus. That's just our thing. And we had, you know, a fair bit of luggage. But one of the, I think, smart things we did was do this on a weekday. So we didn't come on the weekend where traditionally I think a lot more local Vietnamese would come. So we did this on a Monday. So the Starting point was a cafe where everyone met. We were very welcomed at this cafe to leave our bags while the bus came to get us. And then we piled into that little bus and we trotted along at a very even speed. We could holler for a bath stop if we needed to. But yeah, we were on the back wheels there, and we were jogging along the way. And there's a bit of video that I think Kelly was so kind to capture during that part. So let's talk about, like, Kelly, for you, when we decided to do this, like, what was your headset around coming out here and, like, not going anywhere else other than the hotel?

**Kelley McCarthy:** Well for me, for starters, anyone that knows me, I'm a shopper, so Saigon is my favourite city, getting out and about. So coming out here I knew it was all about relaxation, so we planned that we would make it a short stay of only a couple of days. um coming out here so on the way out it was a case of right let's get into wind down mode cocktails wine nibbles on the beach putting the swimsuit on and just floating in the pool if you could see me now you would definitely see that i've been floating in the pool today i'm like a little lobster so Don't forget to pack that sunscreen and take it down to the pool. It's all about relaxation when you come out here. Don't come out to a destination hotel and think you're going to go off to a little township. By all means, if you were out here for more than a couple of days, you can arrange tours to go and see the local area but you don't really want to leave the resort because it's got everything here. It's beautiful, it's got day spas which we sort of indulged in today which was magnificent. You've got a cafe, you've got a couple of choices of restaurants, it's got everything that you need just to unwind.

**Kerry Newsome:** And I think unwind is a good word. I think I was mouthing the word chill, chill everywhere. I mean, we're in close vicinity to Vung Tau. So if you wanted to, you wanted to make a day trip, that would be a very easy one.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It's very close by. About 22 k's for anyone. Yes. Interested.

**Kerry Newsome:** So I mean, that would be a city and obviously with its own history and its own culture and its own story to tell. So you could do that. But getting back to, I hate to harken on this everyone, but like the purpose of this trip was to really find a destination hotel. In other words, a hotel, and I'm not by means saying that where we chose to say is the only hotel to do this, or the only hotel in this region. It's the one we chose to do, and we chose it because I'd had some great advice and some recommendations to do so. But, you know, in my mind I was thinking, now, you know, it's a short trip, it's two hours, I'm coming here with a fun girl, so, you know, I've got entertainment actually sitting alongside me if it all else fails. But the chill factor was, a great thing because we had been super busy in Saigon. And when you come to Saigon, it's so easy to get caught up in the electricity of that city and you're kind of doing things all the time. So if you are looking for just a breakaway, you've got the villas here for a family. You know, we walked past, you know, the pool tonight when you're coming down and they had a movie set up on the lawn with bean bags and they were selling popcorn. So I'm trying to get in that fulfill, I guess is the other word, that out and about story, but talk it through with you in regards to the headset you have. So if you are wanting to come out and about in Ho Tram and you're choosing a hotel, chill's got to be your number one factor. Come out here to literally do nothing. Now I'm going to put it on Kelly and I'm going to say, okay, what do you think are the standouts for this location as a hotel?

**Kelley McCarthy:** I think it's got an amazing pool right with an infinity over the beach. So for those people that are just traveling and might be doing a quick seven day trip in and out of Ho Chi Minh City, you can get a little bit of variety by coming out here because you're actually getting to a beach where in Saigon there is no beaches. So you get out here. So that's a standout for itself. You don't have to take a flight. So there's none of those check-in times to go to a further away area. It had great food. We've tried all the restaurants here on site. It had a pool bar. Like I said, we tried the day spa today, which was exceptional.

**Kerry Newsome:** The day spa, I have to say, is now, I've now decided that Vietnam has got the quality of day spas that you need and expect as a Westerner. It was just die for.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, using Thalgo products, so it was a fabulous day spa, not using sort of a product that might have been a Vietnamese product that we didn't. And there is a kids club here, at the moment it is currently under renovation, so you could come out as a family if you wish to. But a little joke aside, Kerry and I did note that it was a lot of loved up couples out here. and over 55, so of course that sort of cut us out on both angles. We did talk about

tonight being loved up coming back from dinner just to fit in with the crowd, but definitely a romantic place if you're wanting to bring your partner here for a couple of days to wow them or for those guys out there, pop the question. It's a great location for that.

**Kerry Newsome:** But don't come out here thinking that you'll find somebody to pop the question. All loved up. No, they're definitely with somebody else and they do not have eyes to spare for you. Sorry about that. But so definitely families, couples of any descriptions. Probably misfits like us who you know like we could pretend to be a couple any day but like probably not have the full length of that. but like it was just very very noticeable for us as we walked around.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It's where you seek a little bit of privacy as well because if you're a traveler that's been to some of the other resorts of places you know that got pool bars such as Bali or Thailand this is not that kind of destination it's not party crowds by the pool. It's more intimate. I think everyone comes here for a little bit of intimacy. But very beautiful. The wind blowing. The beach is divine isn't it? It is really lovely.

**Kerry Newsome:** White sand for miles. Very easy access. I really liked the openness. No gating. hard security kind of feel around it. It was very, very relaxed. Staff were mostly good. I think, you know, we're still experiencing some issues with language where, you know, lots of hand gestures goes on and lots of kind of pointing to things. And I think staff is still trying to, you know, step up to the ability to be able to converse with us with English as well as they did pre-COVID.

**Kelley McCarthy:** I think a really important point to note here, if there's any travellers out there that are mobility impaired, it would be an easy resort to get around. Wide pathways, there's also, even if you're a little bit older, as in the over 55s we spoke about, There is golf buggies that can drive you around the resort as well so it would cater to those sort of people that were just wanting to relax but really couldn't sort of walk too far or anything because it is quite a spread out resort so that would give you that opportunity if you are that way to enjoy it as well.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, and I think I tried to bring it up in the sense too that it's kind of an escape from Saigon. It's got beautiful golf courses. In fact, Ho Tram has been known mostly for golf in previous years. It's only really just come to the fore again in trying to promote itself as a luxury five-star resort location. So, you know, I get a lot of people that say, look, you know, they've been to Saigon or they're coming through Saigon and they've got a couple of days spare. They don't want to go out in the heat and do the Mekong Delta. They don't. They've already done the Cu Chi Tunnels. They just want somewhere else to go and I thought I needed to find somewhere else that could just give that escape. Sure, it's five star and it is a little bit more costly. Let's talk about cost just into the field of things today. What do you think?

**Kelley McCarthy:** I think, well, Kerry and I did the package where you have a choice. You can come out here and you can either just do your room stay, which includes breakfast, or you do have the opportunity to do half board or full board. We went for half board, which gave us breakfast and dinners, and that made it extremely affordable. I think for the five-star resort that it definitely is, it made it extremely affordable because you got, at your dinner time, you got an entree, a main, a dessert, and one beer or soft drink. There was no wine or spirits, but for anyone out there that wants a nice cold beer sitting on the beach, looking out over the ocean, it was a great opportunity. So I think the board package definitely makes it affordable. Because just keep in mind, you are isolated, so you're a captured audience. So costs are a little bit higher when it comes to your drinks and your food. So if you can do that half board package, it just makes it really affordable, I feel.

**Kerry Newsome:** Absolutely. And you've got to remind yourself too, you are in a five-star resort. So, once again, we're sort of saying it's a destination, but it's still a hotel. It's a five-star hotel. And it's got restaurants, and it's got bars, and it's got beach, and it's got drinks in the pool, and it's got spa, and it's got everything. The room sizes are definitely ample. We're staying in a two-bedroom apartment, which is just delightful. We've got, you know, water provided, we've got coffee, beautiful breakfast. So, you know, I think if you can get your head wrapped around the idea of, you know, being out and about in Ho Tram but at a hotel. I think that's the caveat I need to put to this that it, we didn't go out into Ho Tram. You know, we looked out the windows and we've kind of seen some farming areas and we've thought, you know, maybe next time we would venture out and look, you know, further. Both of us have already been to Vung Tau, so, you know, that's not a city that we wanted to go to on this trip. So I really honed in on the fact that the hotel is the destination. So I hope if you've got any further questions you'll get in touch. We're certainly keen for you to share these episodes as I'm going out. I'm really enjoying the fact of being out and about and trying new places. and even some old places, to be honest, and finding new things. And doing this with Kelly has just been an absolute joy. So please share, please send me your reviews, please follow us on our Facebook, our Instagram and TikTok and LinkedIn pages. and we'd love to hear from you. Thanks, Kel, for being on the show.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, and I think we should also note that we haven't been paid to come out here and review The Melia Resort.

**Kelley McCarthy:** This came out of our own back pockets, so to bring you the best reviews on this, and I would highly recommend it for a couple of days out of Saigon.

**Kerry Newsome:** Right with you. Anyway, thanks, everyone.