



What About Vietnam - Series 2 -1

Hoi An - Taking a step back in time

Kerry Newsome: Xin Chao and hello everyone welcome to What about Vietnam, the traveler experience series, this is going to be the series where we get to talk to previous travelers to Vietnam.

And some of those have actually decided to make Vietnam their home. Look, there's so much to cover in Vietnam, and I thought, what better way to do it than to do it through the ears and eyes and the voices of previous travelers.

Those people who have decided to venture to Vietnam and have had a wonderful time and want to share their tips and hints and insights into this country today, we're going to talk about a place in Vietnam, which I call my second home. When I go to Vietnam, I tend to always base myself in this place. And this city is called Hoi An. Hoi An is based in the central part of Vietnam.

So, pretty much it's about 25 minutes from the Da Nang Airport. It gives me the luxury then of being able to go North or South as I play. So, it's a great location.

It's a very easy, comfortable style place with access to the old town and then access to the beach. And it's just, delightful, not too many motorbikes, which makes it even better. I decided to kick it off with Hoi An because it comes up so many times when I talk to travelers as their favorite place, as it is the most popular, and always seems to appear on any Vietnam tour that you would look at.

So, today I'd like you to welcome Paul Simpson to the program. Paul went to Vietnam originally, I think in about 2012 but decided to make it his home, about three years ago, he's General Manager for a hotel within the little Hoi An hotel group in Hoi An, they have about five hotels.

I met Paul about three years ago, he's a very well-traveled person and he just fell in love with Vietnam a bit like me and he also knows I love Hoi An. So, we're sort of on the same page as far as the city is concerned, but Paul is going to share with you some of the history, some of what makes Hoi An almost let you take a step back in time.

It's a very old city, it dates back to the 16th century in some areas and on those streets. And when you see those shop house doors, if only those doors could talk. So, please welcome Paul Simpson to the show. I'm sure you're going to learn a lot more about Hoi An through his experience.

Paul Simpson: The old town was the trading port for the Champa people, which is a regional little medieval kingdom set up at the My Son temple ruins, which was the religious political and cultural capital of this little area. Hoi An was the dynamic engine, the economic drive for

that because it was situated on the river. Sailing ships could come in, get fresh water, make an easier approach, trade with the locals for textiles, ceramics, get fresh water and foods. It was an important place and if you look at the map of Southeast Asia, it's all centrally located. The Royal family that ran all this from the My Son temple ruins died out, but all of the traditional venues that kept their little kingdom going, kept going in their traditional sense; silk, ceramics, fishing and farming. That was everything that drove Hoi An and to their credit people are creatures of habit and change doesn't always come easy.

They still do so many of those things today, the same way so, that it has made Hoi An a very unique step back in time where ceramics, silk, farming, and fishing are all done the same way. And that has created a very wonderful tourism draw.

You can come here and see how those things are done in a beautiful, charming place, similar to and as visually pleasing, like Portofino on the Italy or the Columbia zoo.

And so, all of these things you can do in Hoi An, and you can spend a month here. It's picturesque, so, if you're a photography buff, you can come and see all the places and discover new ones, where to take photos different times a day, different lighting, kind of like Monet.

You can come to Hoi An and ride in a basket boat. They make baskets, giant baskets and turn them into boats. Very creative use of bamboo reeds and palm fronds. You can go to the Tra Que village to learn about local farming techniques and how they still do things by hand. And the foods that you eat in the local restaurants and in your hotels are all farmed here. It's wonderful, very fresh. You're eating literally from farm to table.

You can see how they make silk, where the industry really hasn't changed in the last 500 years. The only thing that's changed is they've mechanized it, but you can still see them using a loom, handweaving things, and they're for sale. They're still here.

You can, you can learn that pottery, the pottery village here still uses a giant earthen oven. They feed it full of wood and charcoal to heat it up. Then they hand-make all of the ceramics and put it in using what looks like a pizza.

What do they call it? Pizza wheel, they put it in using a pizza wheel, and a few hours later, they take it out and it's ceramic.

Hoi An was known for its lanterns. Everyone in Southeast Asia going back four or five, 600 years, they knew about the silk lanterns hanging in the streets of Hoi An. And they're beautiful, they're decorative, they're everywhere. Anyone who comes to Hoi An takes a silk lantern home. You can learn to make them hang them in your house, they're beautiful softly lit. So, you can come to Hoi An, and get the best of pretty much all vacations, you can get, all of those.

You can go golfing at one of four premier golf courses. You can take cooking classes and learn how to cook amazing Vietnamese cuisine, the fusion of flavors. You can come to Hoi An and go to the beach, we have beautiful beaches here.

You can enjoy strolling through the old town and see the history. You're walking down a street that was laid out 500 years ago. The houses really haven't changed, it is an earthen ceramic structure made with ceramic bricks. And hand-carved and hand turned wood accents on the doors. The doors aren't really doors, they're wood slats that they stack up on top of each other. They're still using those, but windows are the same, they have shutters, there's no glass, they're all open. This little town is a United Nations world heritage site because they haven't changed it, they haven't messed it up. Instead of they've preserved it for centuries. Come and explore it, is what I say!

Kerry Newsome: Thank you, Paul, for your wonderful insights into this beautiful city I can't wait to get back. I hope you enjoyed listening to Paul today as he talked about Hoi An and its many offerings to the tourist. It was nice to hear him talk about the historical side of Hoi An and its background to many activities that still go on. Sometimes it's very easy to take that all for granted, but it is a big part of what makes Hoi An unique. Hoi An is undoubtedly one of the most comfortable cities in Vietnam to visit. And because it is a hot spot for tourists, we will hear more about it from all the travelers in future episodes. So, stay tuned, please get your free subscription as then you get notified of new episodes as they come up, please review, and share with potential travelers. Thank you for listening and until next time stay safe everyone.