



## **Out & About in Saigon – UNCUT**

### **With host Kerry Newsome & Kelley McCarthy**

**Kerry Newsome:** Xin chào and welcome to What About Vietnam. Look here we are still in Saigon and I'm delighted to still be sharing my Out and About mini-series with Kelley McCarthy. Say hello Kelley.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Good morning or good afternoon listeners.

Kerry Newsome: Look, we have had a fabulous time and the reason I wanted to produce this next show, the one we're in now, is because we just kept uncovering more and more things and we said, yeah, we need to do another show, we just need to expand. So, this one is really intentionally going to be quite chock-a-block with some of the experiences that we managed to do during the last few days and hopefully for you when you consider coming to Saigon, which for many of you is really just a leapfrog location, you come in, you go out and you go somewhere else. We're kind of thinking more around that you might want to extend. you stay a little bit longer because there is quite a bit to do. So I thought we'd start at the very, very beginning when you've booked your accommodation or we've got you a hotel that either has a breakfast included or it doesn't. Now to be really true and fair and like keeping it all authentic, Kelley's looking at me with this great cheesy grin because we're talking about breakfast. And I'm not a big breakfast girl, but let me tell you, Kelley is a breakfast lover, so I'm going to ask her to speak to the breakfast scene, the cafe scene for that option.

Kelley McCarthy: All right, so for myself, I've been going out and having breakfast each day here in Saigon while Kerry's been catching up on, I think, a little bit more of that beauty sleep. So, I have just done Google searches. I like to try a different cafe each day. You have multiple options. So, basically, if you quickly do a Google search of Western breakfast near me, if that's what you're after, Keep in mind, you've got all of your street food, so if you're wanting to have traditional Vietnamese breakfast. There's a couple of great ones that I go to and frequent regularly. One is called The Running Bean. There is two locations in District 1

for that. There's also another great one I discovered this time. It's called The Godmother. That was fantastic for breakfast. Keep in mind also, you can if you do want to have a buffet breakfast and you're not staying in an international hotel, you can actually go to those and purchase breakfast and sit in the hotel and have breakfast. So that is another option. If you sort of want to stay in a hotel that's just a little bit down in the price rankings and then you want to do an exquisite breakfast, that is an option. So keep that in mind. There's a couple of other places, the Runam cafes, they're scattered everywhere and they have multiple options when you go for breakfast. You'll find one of those in Saigon Centre and also in Vincom Plaza, both in District 1. So, plenty of options out there if you want to go from traditional to fully Western.

**Kerry Newsome:** And, you know, I kind of kick in with Kelley, you know, around the more cafe, coffee kind of time of day. So I'm more that midday. I'm more that brunch is what I'd like to call it, thanks Kel. But certainly I really love my coffee and coffee is definitely on the menu here in Vietnam and certainly in Saigon with the cafe scene. So, every 50 metres you're going to find a coffee or cafe scene option anywhere you go.

Kelley McCarthy: And that's a great time for me to then kick into the second morning snack, which is my coffee and cake delight, which, let me tell you, are everywhere. I'm like a bunny looking for the next food place just to try something different. So Kerry gets the giggles each time it's, oh, oh, it must be cake o'clock. So off we go. She has her mid-morning coffee and I have my second bout.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, look, if you need someone to try something or to sniff out something that is delicious, she seems to have antennas that will, oh, look at that over there. We need to cross the road now and we need to, sure enough, we open the door and it's this glorious scene of cakes and smells of coffee and yeah, delicious, delicious. Now Kel, we got to think about planning for the day, girls and guys. Now, I've got a really big guys audience, so to you out there this is kind of how we think things could roll for you. So, depending on your appetite, depending on you know, the weather, like how hot it is, depending on whether or not you're an adventure seeker, maybe you're a historian, you know, there's just so many options apart from your main tourist attractions, so places of interest, You know, adventure-wise, you can definitely go out and do the Coochie Tunnels, you can go and explore the Mekong Delta. There's lots. And you can do that through your hotel or you can do that through a local agent. We have a guy that we deal with, Lee Hogan, who does a fabulous job for us and for some of my clients. So, we would definitely put him forward for that. But if you don't want to miss the game or you've got to watch that match or something like that, you might want to head to a bar called Phatty's

**Kelley McCarthy:** That's P-H-A-T-T-Y's

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes. And it's pretty famous for, yeah, you'll find a lot of people seeking the same thing in that bar. A lot of expats tend to go there and you know it's just kind of a famous place for keeping up with sports and things like that for that taste I guess.

Now, Grab is easy to get around to find Phatty's. It's in District 1. So, for that kind of interest for you guys, if you want to let us girls go and do our thing, which might be totally different, yeah, that would be our recommendation. Kelley?

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yep, and for the ladies, if you want to drop your husbands off there, it is literally 30 metres to Saigon Centre for some shopping for you to sit down and either have one of those cakes and coffees I talk about, or you could have a walk around the stores in there. So, it's very, very close.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes. So, that's a good segue into us talking about shopping. So, we'll start with the mains and the reason I want to talk about the mains is in the sense that there is some aspects of each of the main shopping centres that we've kind of figured out that differentiates them and we'll go into more of that in a minute. So there is Saigon Centre, Vincom Plaza, Diamond Plaza and Vincom Megamall. So Kelley maybe you could talk to us a little bit about some of the key differences between the main ones being Saigon Centre and Vincom Plaza.

**Kelley McCarthy:** So Saigon Centre has a large department store in it called Takashimaya. It's a Japanese department store. It is a high-end Japanese department store, but if you go to the lower levels in there, you can get some great specials. Downstairs as well. There's lots of little boutique stores through that shopping center And that one also so Takashi Maya also looks after all the ladies Fragrances skincare products such as your Estee Lauder's and you know all of those skincare groups It also has a couple of stores that are the store independent such as your Chanel, NARS for skincare. So, and then you've got your rotating levels in that centre for other things like your Calvin Klein, and a lot of other independents. So that's the individual boutiques there as well. Where if you go across to Vincom Plaza, that will then have things like Zara, H&M, and another lot of independents, but they don't seem to double up in the larger stores in the same shopping centers like in other countries do. So, that's where it is. Vincom Mega Mall is out in District 2, very similar to Vincom Centre here, but on a larger scale. And then Diamond Plaza is very, very high end. So, that will have your Burberry's, Prada, all of the fragrant houses and then independent brands going up through the levels is there as well.

**Kerry Newsome:** And like, you know, these major centres, you know, sometimes people think of them and say, you know, who wants to go to Vietnam and go to a shopping mall and that kind of thing. You'd be quite surprised to the experience you can have in those shopping centres. It's not, you know, like coming from Australia, I do see the shopping mall becoming very much same, same. You'll go from one shop to another and everything seems to be the same, where there'll be a really big mix in these shopping malls and even to the extent of food and coffee options, really cute cafes And definitely food-wise, certainly in, you know, the centres that we did, Saigon Centre mainly and Vincom Plaza. Kelley, that really cute Japanese-style one that we had that had a kind of a tapas lunch. Yeah, Miava. Yeah, that was just fabulous. And, you know, we actually discussed the fact around, you know, people would not possibly seek it out because it is in a shopping centre. But wow, we were just, price wise it was great, the quality of the food was excellent, and just the variety plus was just, I was really impressed.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, they have some great little places in those shopping centres. And they generally have the food set out on certain floors, but there'll be a couple of little ones scattered through the other level. So really seek out these food places in those shopping centres.

**Kerry Newsome:** It might mean you get a bit dizzy going round and round in the elevators and the lifts, etc. But it's worth doing a search. Now, we would be remiss if we don't talk about markets here. And I guess this is another thing I want to kind of demystify. You know, Vietnam is not just about markets. Definitely not. It's just not now the focus being on copy products and all the rest of it. It has come up into some really high quality artisan goods, creative concept stores and things like that. So, the markets are definitely there and it's an experience you do need to do, I think, at least once. Probably Kelley and I have done it quite a few times. So, we're well practiced in the Ben Thanh markets in the Saigon Square. And

Saigon Square is kind of a very smaller version just opposite Saigon Centre. So, you can kind of do both those in the same visit and maybe a little bit more expensive. So, I'm going to lead Kel into just talking about the bargaining side of things because I'm a shocking bargainer. I get what I want, but I probably don't get it at the super best price. But there is a skill to it. And as Kelley was reminding me this morning, you've got to go hard in Ben Thanh. Talk to us about going hard in Ben Thanh, Kelley.

**Kelley McCarthy:** So, Ben Thanh market is more of a, you get your fabrics, you can get food in there, you can get a huge variety. It's under one large tin roof, so it is hot in there, so I suggest going in the morning to get your best price. Go in the morning, you get a morning price, and go hard in your bartering. So, they will start off at an astronomical price. So keep it in mind what you would realistically pay for it in your own country if you were happy with it. And that's where you roughly want to be. So for example, 50% at least is what you want to get of what their first price is offering. And just remember, haggling over 20 or 30,000 at the end of the day is a couple of dollars. So don't wear yourself out on that. Do it with a smile. It'll be a lot of good for me, good for you pricing. When you win. When you win. good for you, not so good for me, and with a little bit of a not so much of a big smile, and then they seem to come down. And if you do it with a smile, you'll get a lot further, don't be aggressive. If you're after a lot of the high-end copies, I would suggest Saigon Square for that. A, it's air-conditioned as well, ladies, but that's where you will get, because there is definitely a difference between good copy and bad copy.

So in Saigon Square, that is where you'll get the more high-end copy. You will pay a bit more for it, but you'll get a great pair of copy runners for around, I would suggest 1 million to 1.5 million is where you would go with those, but they will start off at 2.5, 3 million, sometimes even higher. So just keep in mind what you're happy with as your price, and then if you come out happy, that's where you go. Don't discuss it with anyone else, because they might then shut you down and make you feel a little incompetent by saying oh we got it for this but at the end of the day it'll be a couple of bucks.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah and like for some people you know they really want to treat it like sport and really their talking point for the night will be just how they were able to you know bargain down this person and you know get them for this you know astronomically low price and yeah good on you but like you know this is these people's livelihood too so I don't, you know, Kelley mentioned, you know, \$20,000, \$30,000 in your own currency, you're going to find that's, you know, \$0.30, \$0.50, \$1, \$1.50, \$2. And you go, well, if it's really that important, yeah, move on. But if you really want that item, And it's just worth walking away with you both smiling, with a win-win situation. Sometimes it can be a lot of fun. They make jokes. It's a real event, so you can really enjoy your time. part of shopping here in Saigon and certainly around the country is becoming more prevalent and I'm seeing more of and I'm delighted to do so. And that's the concept stores, so that's where you know locals are designing their own goods and making their own goods locally, sometimes out of local produce, and they can be really interesting. So, we kind of had a really good look around the Katinat building, and it's opposite H&M, and H&M is in... District 1. District 1, and the... And it's in Vincom Centre. And in the Vincom Centre. So, when I'm out and about, I kind of get myself to the Vincom Centre, walk out the H&M door to outside and then cross the road and you'll see the Playground and you'll see the Katinat building. And that's how I best describe for you to visit these stores. Definitely make a time to visit these. Now, you're probably not always going to find your size and if you are a mixed size group of people like in your family or whatever, unless you're the small, very small. Size 10. And under.

**Kelley McCarthy:** I buy lots of sunglasses, earrings, bracelets, handbags.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes and look occasionally I can fit into them you know I'm roughly a 10 in Australian standards but yeah I'm not small shouldered.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Don't be precious about looking at the size tag, go with what fits you. Kerry's a size 10 and I know she's looked a couple of times when they've said Oh, you be extra large or extra, extra large. So, don't let that offend you. That's just their sizing system.

**Kerry Newsome:** Go with what fits. Absolutely. And, you know, while we're in this shopping headset or this part of the program, probably worth mentioning that size thing in a very trip planning mode. So, when you're packing and you're thinking about what to bring, If you are a shoe size over 39, bring all the shoes you need.

**Kelley McCarthy:** So, that's in UK, US and Australian. That would be above, basically a size 8.5. If you're a size 9 or 10, you have got no hope in getting shoes here, unless you buy men's shoes.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes, but I mean I know even I took my grandson here and he was the size 13, we couldn't find anywhere like shoes to fit and you know my husband coming over for the wedding and I'm thinking about you know shoes I'm going you know 11, 12 is that going to fit maybe? But then we're stuck and he's got runners to wear to the wedding, so no, we won't be doing that. But for me, I'm a 36. So I can pick any shoe off any shelf and it's just a delight. And devastating for me. Kelley stands there and growls. But like seriously it is a pleasure for me to buy shoes over here. So I get all the really natty bits and pieces. So I buy a lot of shoes girls. I'm just I'm just putting it out there. So yeah, and the other aspect, a little bit delicate, but in the undergarment.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Underwear and bras. Ladies, I'm a size 18 and a size 18D in bra cups. Please don't forget this in your suitcase, because you are going to be doing a lot of non-underwear moments. If you do, you will never buy them here. At all. I, for example, I even asked a dressmaker if she could insert a bra into my dress so I didn't have to wear one, a false bra. She just looked at me with this horrified look and said, no cup size big enough. Kerry Newsome: So. No, and they don't know like how to wrap their head around women with busts. So, you know, like if you are.

**Kelley McCarthy:** King Kong comes to mind for them.

**Kerry Newsome:** But have you seen them try to get their arms to get around you when they're doing that tailoring? Like they've got these, you know, beautiful like delicate figures and they're kind of stretching themselves to get around you and you feel like... I get a lot of bear hugs when they're trying to measure me. Yeah, I know, it's crazy. But like, yeah, so don't come and then get stuck with, oh, I really should have bought another sports bra, I really should have bought... And think cotton also in definitely in the hot months because you know, 90% humidity is an average day, so when you're out and about and you're doing things, I've got to tell you, you are really churning and burning clothes, just pure saturation point. So, yeah, just we thought that was definitely worth mentioning for you because we want you to feel good.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It kind of goes for you guys too so you are not going to find extra large underwear if you forget them. Most men here would be a 28 inch waist at best so don't forget your underwear gentlemen as well.

**Kerry Newsome:** Okay point noted. Now, I'm leading now down the path of tailoring. Now, we have to kind of... there's a bit of a caveat with this with us as we have done, as you can tell, lots of shopping in the past and in this trip, but also we've done a lot of tailoring in the past, etc. But we wanted to try tailoring in Saigon. Now, I really have to invite Kelley to share her experience, which came with a reference from a local. So, we didn't go in blindsided. We went into this place, you know, as being told that this was a quality tailor. So, over to you Kelley.

**Kelley McCarthy:** So, going into the tailors here, first tip, be very direct with what you want. Don't sugarcoat it. It's very direct. Pictures are a great thing and they're a great thing to keep hold of to reference back to. For example, our tailor here, I showed pictures, told her what we want, I came back and it wasn't how I'd requested it. They tried to say, you not tell me this yesterday. So, I quickly snapped my phone, pull up the pictures, show them that what I requested is not in the imagery. I think in my situation here in Saigon, had I just nodded and said yes, yes, very happy on the first fitting, all would have gone well. But when I wanted them to tweak a few things, change a few things, and tell them basically that their tailoring wasn't up to scratch for what I wanted, things went a little pear-shaped. In the end, I just walked out saying, thank you, I take this one, I hate it. It was much easier just to write off that bit of money.

**Kerry Newsome:** There was actually kind of almost fisticuffs happening between the tailor and the shop owner. So, the shop owner was trying to be the mediator and her English was a lot better than the actual tail, the seamstress herself. But she was really starting to crack it. And yet, so the poor shop owner was going, like, I don't know what to do here. And Kelley's just going, I hate it. This isn't right. This isn't what I asked for. here's the picture, blah, blah, blah. So, we can't kind of say it was the perfect experience and we have been treated very differently with tailoring in Hoi An. But Hoi An, it is its superpower.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It specializes in tailoring.

**Kerry Newsome:** There is a tailor every corner. They're only shop fronts because the tailors are actually working from home and working in other places, but it is the mecca for tailoring. If you do have tailoring you want done, Like, we can't really put hand on heart and say, look, definitely get it done in Saigon. We would, you know, we kind of made this agreement before coming on the show and said, look, you know, it wouldn't be our go-to recommendation for tailoring. So, Saigon, sorry to say, we're not going to put you up there for tailoring. But you've got plenty of other streets to talk about.

**Kelley McCarthy:** I feel the best way to describe it is in Hoi An, they are perfectionist. So, if you're not happy with something, they will tweak it, whether that takes one alteration or 10, till you walk out that store happy, where here in Saigon, it was more of a business transaction. Had I've got it right the first time and just accepted it, it would have been okay, but there was a lot more complexity to what I wanted. and it was more about the tailor herself, the seamstress, didn't want to undo what she had already done because it was in the too hard basket.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah definitely and they really didn't care whether we walked out with a smile on our face or not. So it was a totally different experience and a bit disappointing and flavoured by the fact we had had such pleasurable experiences in Hoi An. So, we're a bit tainted, but we want you to have that knowledge when you're making these choices, when you're staying in these places. We just don't want you to come to Saigon and go, oh, well, I can get my tailoring done here, you know, you heard on the What About Vietnam podcast, it's fantastic. Well, we're just saying you might luck it, you might find that one, And it might all go absolutely fantastic, but Saigon to me is not known for tailoring. No. Okay, so moving right on, I'd like to kind of get stuck into food.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Oh, my favourite topic.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, like I was going to put this section and kind of call it the foodie havens that we found, and we found a lot. We found a lot. So, I don't know which way to begin this, but we tried lots of cuisines. So, I'm going to start with just the overall parent subject of different cuisines. Don't think for a minute when you come to Vietnam and Saigon in particular that you're stuck with just Vietnamese. Not that that's a bad thing to be stuck with, but you can get Italian, Korean, Spanish,  
**Kelley McCarthy:** Japanese, Chinese, Indian, basically any cuisine you could imagine, you can get it here.

**Kerry Newsome:** It was an interesting journey on the foodie trail for us. because we tried some really high-end restaurants, so we had very high expectations. They'd also been referred to us. So, we then tried probably what you'd classify as more your mid-range, and like, I don't know, Kelley, how do we say this?

**Kelley McCarthy:** I feel as though some of those mid-range, presentation-wise and taste-wise, far exceeded some of the high-end restaurants. And the same as like we talk about in the shopping centres, some of those bistros in those shopping centres, because we have a very strong French influence here in Saigon, so presentation is an utmost thing for them. Kerry Newsome: Yeah, I mean we were walking along a street yesterday looking for a lunch place and Kelley walks into this kind of dodgy kind of alley and I'm going... Get down those alleys. Definitely, but like have you got a place in mind and she said well I think there's a few here I've tried one of them and we stumbled across this really old-worldly kind of French restaurant and just had the most delightful meal and felt like we were in mini France, like even like the furniture and the... It's like a bistro in Paris. It was, it really was and you know we went to places like Zumware and the one that we liked the most was the one at Social Complex.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Social Complex it's called.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, but it's got about eight locations hasn't it?

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, eight locations in the city and this is on the ground floor on the corner. It's open from mid-morning right through to I think one, two o'clock in the morning. Not saying we didn't stop in there for our last coffee and cake at about 1.45 in the morning.

**Kerry Newsome:** Absolutely, but previous to that Kelley had fallen in love with the salmon.

**Kelley McCarthy:** They did an amazing salmon sashimi with a truffle vinaigrette and a small amount of caviar on top of the salmon. I think you get about eight pieces. I probably could have had about four plates, but did stop at one. Did stop at one because I needed to move along to the next food location. So, progressive dinners here are a delight. Just have a nibble at one, move along to the next. Don't commit to just one restaurant.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, I was a big fan of the roast duck with caviar and gold leaf. It was beautifully arranged. You might see it in some of the images I share on our social pages, so keep an eye out for that. But it was just, it was melt in your mouth, but just the flavours of the caviar with it. I would never have put those two together. But the presentation with the gold leaf was just, it just had that wow factor. And I think that's where we got to with trying some of the other high-end restaurants. It just didn't have that wow factor.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It fell short in presentation as well.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, so you know we really love our Runam. [Runam](#) is very, very well known in Vietnam and it's a beautiful coffee shop. They're very nicely, the decoration, the whole layout, their food is reliably good and tasty. Best chicken wings you'll try anywhere. Yeah, and you love the salads as well. Yes, and they're great little salads. So definitely your runums. Kelley discovered this one called [Miyama](#).

**Kelley McCarthy:** That's a Japanese restaurant. I think it's level three.

**Kerry Newsome:** Modern Tokyo restaurant.



**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, that's in Saigon Center for all those people that are wanting lots of nibbles or even just beautiful. They do, once again, do beautiful salads. There's a great Italian restaurant called Basilica next door to it, which is also in Vincom Center. So, Kerry Newsome: Yeah, I had the clam chowder pie at Basilica and it was just to die for. And sometimes, you know, we talked about the fact that you can be trying so much Vietnamese food, you just want to then have something really hearty or you want to have something that's a bit more typical of home and that might be Italian or that might be a pizza or that might be You know, just something that reminds you of home. And I was really feeling like I wanted something really hearty. And that clam chowder pie, I thought, how are they going to do this? Are they really going to know how to do clam chowder in Vietnam? Oh, yeah. It was just to die for. So, we did explore, you know, some other places and we probably wouldn't be suggesting those for food but probably more for that moody bar, nice experience to have a lovely cocktail, you know, really lovely stuff and things like that, you know, like at Loon, like at Kaya San, beautiful, beautiful restaurants. So, you get the ambience of the restaurant but you might, you know, choose to do what Kelley was saying about the progressive style. You might want to go and have a cocktail at one place then move on and have, you know, a main meal somewhere else and you can really mix it up. Yeah. And I think that was the learning curve for us is don't feel settled to just stay and do everything in the one place because everything is close and everything is easy to access.

**Kelley McCarthy:** And keeping in mind too, if you're in District 1 and you're wanting to go from one side of District 1 to the other, it's going to cost you only about \$32,000 in a grab. So, you know, you can duck and weave to any restaurant that you see fit. So, that's like a couple of dollars to get in the cab and go to the next restaurant. And they don't mind serving one plate and then moving on to the next. It's not... Absolutely.

**Kerry Newsome:** And I think, you know, this is where this city becomes a really great place for men and women. And I think, you know, families as well, you really get the opportunity to try such a variety of food. and get it or have it displayed to you or offered to you in the consumable way you want it. Like the restaurants are open for extensive hours, the menus are very extensive, they're very clearly laid out to what's in them. So a dish is going to tell you exactly what's in it. Usually the staff are pretty good with English so they're going to be able to have someone there to explain it to you if you can't see in the menu what it is. So, you know, if you are vegan or if you are gluten intolerant, you know, don't think coming to Vietnam is going to really dull down your experience of food options here. You're going to be able to find some. You might have to look a little bit further than us, but you definitely will find different options. We've seen them on all menus that we've

**Kelley McCarthy:** The only thing I'd be fearful of would be people with such as a peanut allergy or something like that. As much as if they tell you they don't use peanuts or anything, just keep in mind the preparation is not necessarily going to be like home. I don't know that they're going to have that separate chopping board or that separate knife or anything like that for allergies. So just be wary of that. Bring your EpiPen if that's what you require. Just be really open-minded to that.

**Kerry Newsome:** And also for those who have allergies to MSG, I think you're going to find MSG in most dishes. I checked with one of my guests, [Tracy Lister](#), who has written some fabulous Vietnamese cookbooks and worked in some amazing restaurants and has her own restaurant actually back in Australia. She confirmed for me that really if there's a broth or a sauce or that kind of thing, MSG is going to be in it. If you are MSG intolerant, we would suggest you stick with fresh options that you see, you know, like you bought it out of the tub and it's fried or it's whatever so you can see how it's cooked.

**Kelley McCarthy:** But that MSG makes it flavour. Flavour, flavour, flavour.

**Kerry Newsome:** I'm with you, girl. Yeah, I hate to say that. Now, taking you further through Saigon and some different kind of experiences. Now, just another caveat here. We're not going to talk in this show about the main attractions, about, you know, the tourist attractions that everybody would see on a map of the to-do places for first-time visitors. You're going to get that through Vietnam tourism, Ho Chi Minh City tourism. And we do, we think they do that more than adequately. So, we want to take you to the, I don't know, off the beaten track kind of things. Now, we've talked about shopping and let me say I probably might have gone a wee bit overboard and did a bit of swap around, you know, I brought something then I didn't like it because I found something better and blah, blah, blah. So, we tracked down the idea that I would post some items back to Australia and we thought well let's make that a kind of part of our day and a few things to add to that. So, my experience at the post office was absolutely fantastic. So, I arrived with my bag, all kind of neatly packaged up as best I could to the counter and got greeted by this lovely guy who, apart from saying hello, giving us the forms and me filling them out as diligently as I could, was easy to do because they had English as well as Vietnamese. As I'm signing the paperwork, etc., he says, do you like pink? And I look down and I'm wearing a pink shirt and I've got pink fingernails. And I said, yes, I do. He goes, hmm, pink is good. Okay. And then I hand the parcel over and I've got to go to another counter to pay for the parcel to be sent back. And I said, so what happens now? You have the parcel? He said, yeah, I have the parcel now. My parcel. And off you go. And I go, oh, okay. And he goes, no, go over there, pay there, I look after, it's all good. I went, right, you have my parcel, right.

**Kelley McCarthy:** He even provided a great little tip as we were filling in the paperwork for Kerry. Kerry was putting down values on it and he said to us, oh, no, no, must be under \$200. If over \$200, government want receipts. So keep a note, put in your value on that, keep it under \$200 in total so that you can just get that parcel on the post and get it home.

**Kerry Newsome:** Don't think about posting back really valuable items. are either sentimental to you or have a high end value. Like I don't think along those lines, I'm just really swapping out. Getting rid of the bulk. I'm getting rid of bulk and heavyweight things that I've changed up. So very close to the Central Post Office and it's cute. you know, we really, you know, had a quick walk around and did a few things. It's actually on the list of visit places for the city, so if you'd like to check that out, please do so. And you know now, you've got it in your back pocket, if you do do some shopping and go a bit crazy like me, you can, you know, backtrack yourself there on your way to the airport, get in there, ship it back home and it'll be home about two or three weeks.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It was approximately \$30 Australian per kilo. Yeah, so it's not super cheap. Yeah, but it would just be weighing it up as what your excess luggage would be, as whatever works best. Exactly. So if we give you that guide, that will be something that you can look at against your excess luggage.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, for sure. Now, so kind of a street and a bit over is what they call Book Street.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, sort of just keep walking past the post office and it's on your right, sort of next lane way up.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes and I didn't think it would be as visible or distinctive but it is. It's got kind of a statue of some kind sort at the very beginning of it and then as you look through the statue you'll actually see the street sort of goes on. everywhere books everywhere but like not only just books there was arts and crafts there was books there was like gift cards it was just it was just And what? There was little coffee shops in there? Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, it was just if you wanted to spend just an hour or so just off doing something a little bit different, maybe didn't bring something with you to read. There was English as well as Vietnamese. You had to dig a bit deeper for that.

**Kelley McCarthy:** I think if you just ask, they usually give you the version in English too because they have it in quite a few languages.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, and some of your very old classics were there. So, I just loved it. I thought, you know, I could just meander here and pick little bits and pieces etc. to take back or to read later. So, I loved Book Street. I really thought it was a nice add-on. The other thing that Kelley's got me on to, which I think is a fun thing to do when you're wearing your white runners, shoe cleaning. Kel, talk to us about shoe cleaning.

**Kelley McCarthy:** You will get this wherever you walk around in District 1, but mostly near Saigon Centre markets and Bentang markets. you'll be walking along you'll have some little man carrying a little wooden basket come up to you and he'll just point to your shoes generally what they're wanting to do is clean them and it's okay people take them off you the first time i did it i did watch him walk about 30 meters down the street to clean them thinking he's just taking my brand new sketches But no, he did come back with them. So they will give them a good clean. They generally take them away from you. And I think it's because of the dry cleaning fluid that they use on them, but they come back dry, spotless. The price for that for everybody is 50,000. So just to let you know, they start trying to sting you a little bit more. It is 50,000 dong. They may come back, try and sell you some inner soles for another 30,000 and you might need this and you might need that. Average is \$50,000 for a clean and wherever we come back via Saigon, there's some great little local ladies selling beer for the men that want to sit down and have a beer across from the markets whilst the ladies shop. You can be sitting down there and then you will get your shoes clean.

**Kerry Newsome:** How long does it take actually?

**Kelley McCarthy:** Two or three minutes. two or three minutes to do yeah so this time i literally was walking down the street heading back to the hotel and the man grabbed me and said shoes and i said ah yes forgot perfect so i stood on the side of the pavement he did

give me a pair of scuffs to put on but they would fit my big toe and so i sort of just stood there on top of them so i wasn't with bare feet on the pavement i was gonna say that pavement would be hot wouldn't it oh no it's not so much the heat it's more the color of the pavement. So I just stood there on top of the little shoes while he cleaned them for me and it was literally a couple of minutes. Paid him my \$50,000, we both smiled at each other and off I went with clean white shoes again.

**Kerry Newsome:** Love your work girl, love it. Yeah look these opportunities come up and you do sit there and you go will I, won't I, you know what's the risk factor here and that's why I hope you're loving our show because we're telling you as it is how it happens and look we can't hand on heart say, you know, when they take your sketches, they're not gonna run off into the hills, but you know, on average, that won't happen. So, you know, just use your sense and sensibility headset. Have a bit of a laugh with it. Have a bit of a laugh. What's the worst thing that can happen? They can run off with your sketches, you're gonna go and buy another pair down the street. So that's how we think about it, but like, we don't expect you to, but

**Kelley McCarthy:** And be prepared to be touted if you're sitting down there while you're having a beer. You are going to be offered a bookmark, a magnet, a pair of sunnies, a fan, you know, some twisting, noisy toys, all sorts. So, in the end, my suggestion is make no eye contact. That's my best suggestion.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, and I think after the experience with the tailor, and I hate this, I think you've got that

**Kelley McCarthy:** eye thing going down. You will see what I am thinking from my eyes.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, I'm totally with you. So then the other thing that is on our list of to-do's is to visit our partner [Worldwide Hospital](#), the dental hospital that we have a partnership with. And Kelley's been going back and forth to this hospital for over 10 years. So she always includes a visit there to get her teeth cleaned or whatever. A bit of a check-up. A bit of a check-up. So, that was another visit and it was just great to see those people. The staff there are just so lovely, aren't they?

**Kelley McCarthy:** They're like family.

**Kerry Newsome:** They are. They are so nice to us. I don't get that feeling when I go to my dentist, unfortunately.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, we do here. Yeah, so like I said, been going there for over 10 years, referred family, friends, even have taken my son there since he was four years old. And it's just like family, we get the hugs when we walk in. They do offer cosmetic surgery there, but I can't put hand on heart and say that I've done that yet. Keep an eye out, I have had a couple of quotes done this trip, so I may venture down that path to be able to refer it.

**Kerry Newsome:** We just watched this space on that. There will be a whole show devoted to that if we go down that track.

**Kelley McCarthy:** That's right, but dentistry I can honestly put my hand on my heart and refer them for any dental procedure. Generally when they give you a dental procedure they will probably give you a couple of options. But just keep in mind, whatever option they're giving you, they are confident in doing it. We referred a client a few years ago, they got two options. One was \$40,000, one was something like \$18,000. They chose not to go down the path because when they converted that to Australian dollars, it was quite close to what they

were being offered in Australia. But the \$18,000 option would have been suffice. And especially at the age group they were at. For example, I'll give you my scenario. I have had crowns done over most of my teeth. I have three teeth that are not crowned. I had gaps in my teeth, so I had bridging crowns done. The quote in Australia 10 years ago was \$48,000. I came here to worldwide, it cost me \$5,500. So, in Australian dollars. So, there's the comparison. 10 years down the track, I have had zero complications. I had one tooth that I cosmetically wasn't happy with. There was nothing wrong with it. But in one of my checkups, there was no problem for them to knock that out, replace it and put it in and they didn't charge me. So where do you get a lifetime guarantee in your home country for your dentistry? Like I said!!!

**Kerry Newsome:** All the way. And, you know, we've formed a partnership with them because we have this confidence with their skills, their staff, their abilities. It's a hospital. It's not a shop front. It's not like a dentist off the street. It's a seven level dental hospital. so you know they choose yeah like they make everything you know on site so we've been through the rigours, and I'm terrified of dentists so this was a real big leap of faith for me uh but with Kelley because of her experience and the positivity that's come from that and you know she's shared this same experience with friends and relatives and we've got clients now going through and really loving the time and the workmanship that they put in, the care factor, everything. We can arrange travel, we're their travel partner and if you come through us we can actually give you a 5% discount off their advertised price. So you get it less by coming through us. Anyway, what have you got to lose? You could get a quote and while you're here, it's a short visit, reach out to us, we'll make the appointment for you or you can do it direct, we don't care.

**Kelley McCarthy:** And make sure you mention us.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, to get that discount, to get that reference or get in touch and we'll send you a voucher. So yeah, just a thing to add to the mix of out and about in Vietnam.

Now, once again, we really wanted to delve into the hair and beauty side of things. Oh my God. We have traversed this path before in the hair aspect. Now, we're blondes, both of us, right? So, for a starters, they look at us and their eyes roll because their version of blonde and our version of blonde may not be simpatico. Theirs is orange. Ours is blonde. And then there's the aspect of the moisture aspect of our hair and the volume, texture and product. So, you know, they may have different variations of the products that we may never heard of, but, you know, because they start with the word natural,

**Kelley McCarthy:** Avoid natural ladies. Natural is not the go in Vietnam.

**Kerry Newsome:** Not for us anyway. We have tried to go down that path and I have to say failed abysmally and ended up with tortured hair that took us weeks to repair. So it was a pleasure this time, Kelley had managed to find us a really clever dude who runs a salon and he's called [Tommy's](#) and Kelley over to you of that experience.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah so Tommy's is trained in the gentleman there that runs that he is actually trained in hair from Europe and from London and it's in the Grand Hotel Saigon level one you can reach out to him via Facebook We'll put all of those links on it. He knows anyone that's got blonde hair, he knows to take some moisture out, then he blow dries down the hair shaft, not up, so you don't look like you've had an electric shock. Very sweet,

gives you cups of tea, water, cashew nuts to die for, and the experience. Not the cheapest, so probably similar to Australian prices for blow-dry, as in \$40 to \$50 Australian for the blow-dry, but this experience takes an hour and a half. So you lay down and get the shampoo, you get a massage, they even give you ears clean. So don't be offended by that when they shove the cotton buds in your ears. They're just giving your ears a little clean as well. And then you sit down for the blow dry. And like I said, I come out of there every time smiling with my hair done. And it lasts quite a few days.

**Kerry Newsome:** And I might add, we have a wedding to go to in a few weeks, a Vietnamese wedding. And Kelley's going to go back to have a Up style done. So that's kind of the confidence level we've got, the kind of treatment that you can get from this guy and his staff. They're all lovely. It was just fully air-conditioned, extremely clean. I felt really comfortable. So yeah, we paid a little bit less than what we would pay at home. But it wasn't the cheap and cheerful. It wasn't with natural products. It was with good quality products. And I walked out with hair that I could... Because you're proud to walk down the street with?

**Kelley McCarthy:** as opposed to our last experience?

**Kerry Newsome:** I don't think I'm even game enough to share with you some of those photos. And I might add, they used some product which I was allergic to, so I turned into Elephant Man. And my whole face, so I couldn't get enough antihistamine, Panadol, whatever I could get down my throat to calm my system down because it just went berserk. And I ended up with a frizz ball of hair.

**Kelley McCarthy:** to dry frisball that was expanding as it got drier they rinsed their hair and the natural to give you ladies an idea out there in lotus water so yes i'm talking about the cricket lotus the locust water which was black so i was terrified that i had blonde hair and i was getting black water put all over it so needless to say natural is out hit me with any chemical you can

**Kerry Newsome:** And like, we're probably not the best advocates for natural wear. Other people would have no problem. So, don't write it off. Just take it from us. This is what our experience was and we're just sharing that with you. Now, I can't finish Hair and Beauty without the experience right up to last night that we had, where we found this beautiful place called [Bliss Beauty](#). In District 1. In District 1, yeah. So, we're staying at the [Silverland May](#) at the moment, so it's very close by, about a block and a half.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yeah, not even that, sort of. And that's in the Japanese district, for those people that are wondering. Yeah, really sweet hotel. Yeah.

**Kerry Newsome:** Anyway, so we stepped into that doorway because they were offering pedicures and eyelash Perming and they do do extensions and extensions and all the rest of it. The girl was lovely She had very good English So she was kind of your meet-and-greet person where everybody else in there couldn't speak much English but still talented in what they did and So I had the eyelash curling and the tint, yeah. It's a long process that, that was like 45 minutes was the time period, but just wrapped. The pedicure alone was fantastic, but that process to get that done, like this morning I'm looking and I'm going, you know what, I'm not going to need makeup on my eyes for the next few weeks, which is just going to be fantastic as I go further out and about in Vietnam. And yeah, I just thought the whole experience was good, don't you?

**Kelley McCarthy:** It was amazing. I must admit for myself though, I did go to have the eyelash perming done and I did start to feel a reaction. So I did put up with it for five or ten minutes and then it was just starting to get too irritable. They were absolutely gorgeous. They removed the product, got it off, then blow-dried, washed my eyes, and didn't want to charge me for the process. Of course, I insisted on paying because they've opened their product, they've tried it, it's not their fault that that's happened. So, just that little bit of good karma back, I insisted on paying, which they were very taken back with that.

**Kerry Newsome:** And he proceeded to give us a gift as we left the premises, which was a hair clip. And you just go, where would you get that back home?

**Kelley McCarthy:** It's that smile, friendliness that gets you across the line.

**Kerry Newsome:** I'm kind of conscious of time, Kelley, and my listeners, I know there's a lot in this, so I hope you are enjoying it. I just want to wrap up with a very quick overview of Saigon After Dark. I mean, Kelley and I aren't at that stage of our life where we're probably getting the full Monty of After Dark experiences in Saigon. But we definitely did venture out and I think we already covered with you the Ciocan where it's like a cigar cocktail bar. We would definitely suggest that for that experience. We mentioned the [Zumwhere](#) which we went for the salmon, we went for a cake, you know, like that was all through the night. We mentioned the acoustic bar. There is one in D3 and D2. D2, we think is a little bit more westernized.

**Kelley McCarthy:** It's one... Yeah, international expat area.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, definitely. And I just think the theme of the music and the whole environment, they have one band on for the whole night. where D3 tends to be every three songs it's a different band on and many more artists. Still all very good and it's an absolute fun night. I mean these places don't charge you a door fee but you'll pay that a little bit more in your drinks so just be aware of that. Kelley can speak a bit more to Bui Vien Street more than me. Kel, do you want to just expand a bit on that?

**Kelley McCarthy:** So, Bui Vien Street is worth a walk through, whether you go out at night, whether you want to hit the bars, whether you want to do anything, I think it's a great place just to go down. The lighting, the system of it all is worth a walk through. They call it the backpacker area and the backpacker drinks. Pricing is not of a backpacker's level. For example, a Tiger Beer in a bar along the main strip there, you can be paying \$10 to \$12 Australian for it. So, it's somewhere you probably wouldn't go to have lots of drinks and lose a bit of control. You want to have your wits about you a little bit. There could be pickpocketing going on down there, so make sure you hold on to everything. I took my 13-year-old through there and he just thought it was amazing. There's live music. Yes, there's some girls in clothes or lingerie or men in jeans with shirts off dancing on podiums out the front, but it's not offensive. It's just an experience. So, you could probably get into the seedy underside of it if you wanted to, but just for an experience to walk through, just the lighting and everything, it's amazing.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, I mean the only caveat I want to share on that one is just being careful with your drinks getting spiked and things like that for everyone. So just keep your wits about you, but yeah, definitely worth a wander through.

I want to wrap up, if we can, just on a couple of **travel tips**, just some things to help you along the way that we think would be handy. I want to talk to you about getting a SIM card. Obviously having data when you're out and about, you'll definitely be able to get Wi-Fi as soon as you put your bum down pretty much anywhere, hotels, restaurants, cafes, beauty places, bars, everywhere, everyone's got Wi-Fi. It's basically a fairly unsecured option for you. So don't maybe look up your bank accounts in it, but you know you'll definitely be able to get your Google Maps and your grabs and everything. But if you want to get a SIM card, Kelley's got some really great advice for everyone on that.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Yep, so generally one of the main ones here is [Mobifone](#), so you can actually buy that I think at the airport, but if you go into Circle K, which is just like a little 7-Eleven or your little convenience store, you can get the SIM cards in those and they are really helpful. They will even put it in your phone for you and set it up. And then it runs for a month, what you purchase. So generally I would say to everybody, put a 100,000 dong on it. That's going to last you a fair while on it. But then as you need to top up, you can just go back in there, say to them you need to top this up. They will check your credit for you. They will show you how to put it on or they will even put it on for you. The tip for that though, I have had somebody travelling with me previously from America. She bought a burner phone from America, didn't work for her. So I think they need to be ensured that they're unlocked. That's an unlocked network phone that you can then just drop another SIM into. And yeah, like I said, we've got one here that we use and we swap it around if we're here. But for myself coming from Australia on a short stint, I just use the \$10 a day option. That works well for me.

**Kerry Newsome:** I think the SIM card comes in for people now that we've got the 90-day visa and we've got the multi-entry. You know, over three months and if you're moving around the country, as you know on the Out and About series for this trip for me, you know, I'm going to be in Vietnam and across a lot of out back, for want of a better word, locations coming up. Please stick with the show as we get around. I think the SIM card is definitely a good idea. Definitely. Because you do want that access so you don't get lost, you want Google Maps to understand. you know, it might say... Google Translate. Google Translate with your driver or, you know, just situations which over an extended stay. If you were going to do, you know, a week or a fortnight, well, you might weigh up the options to see what's easy. But the fact that you can top it up at Circle K, if it's an unlocked phone is the key, a mobile phone is the branch. So, I think just we wanted to make sure you got that. Using ATMs is the second thing I wanted to talk about. Now, I have traditionally used ATMs. I'm not really good on that devil of detail as far as every single transaction fee I get charged. However, I do mostly use credit cards in hotels and major shopping centers, etc. It's where I need cash. I try and limit it to getting as much cash out of the ATM as you can. Traditionally, that's around about 3 million. Some will only do 2, which is a real nuisance, but 3 is about the average. You can sometimes go up to 5. Best places to do that would be, you know, your Saigon centers or your Vincoms if you really want that. safety kind of thing. So, you've got to kind of get your head about you and going through DONG with lots of zeros, you can go



through it quite quickly because remembering in Australian standards, a million DONG is about 66 Australian dollars at its worst case. So, like just to keep in mind having cash is really important in a lot of street stalls and very outback areas, where if you are in your major cities like Saigon and Hanoi and Hoi An and Da Nang, big cities, you will be able to use your cards fairly easy. Now the trap in using the ATMs, I'm definitely going to lead Kelley into that because she's been able to identify some things with fees.

**Kelley McCarthy:** So if you're using an ATM, yes I'll give you a great exchange rate as Kerry's always said, however I did mention to her the other day just have a look on my card for my bank fees now go and look at yours. So this will vary from bank to bank but you are going to get charged for example I took out 5 million dong and I had a bank ATM fee, then I had an international transaction fee, and then I had a conversion fee. So to take out that five million dong, I got charged bank fees of about 17 to 18 Australian dollars. So it doesn't make it that great when you're doing that. So that's why we say maximize taking it out. Depends on convenience. In all my years of traveling here, I've always bought cash. But that's how comfortable you feel traveling with cash. You can get a great exchange rate for those in some of the jewelry stores and also all the gold shops. And there is a couple of money changes that are really competitive. In fact, they even give you a higher rate than XE, I've found.

**Kerry Newsome:** You're a pretty good negotiator with those gold traders.

**Kelley McCarthy:** And the other tip too, if you're changing \$1,000 or something at a time and they've given you a rate, if you've got clean, crisp \$50 or \$100 notes from Australia or even from your own country, ask them is that the best rate they can give. They will usually increase it if you're doing a larger transaction too. Keep that in mind. My other tip is changing money cash in Saigon. You are going to get a far better exchange rate than what you will if you're changing money in Hoi An or Nha Trang or any of those other places. You get a far better exchange rate here. And sometimes in those other places, it gets a little hard to change cash too. So, Saigon's your spot when you're doing that. Absolutely. Or Hanoi, probably.

**Kerry Newsome:** And as far as the ATM machines themselves, we suggest to avoid HSBC. They have a higher charge. They do. And be very careful when you're looking at the machine that it has the MasterCard or the Visa symbols.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Or the Cirrus.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes. So that, you know, you're not trying to access it from a machine that, you know, isn't tied to your card or the network payment channel that is tied to yours. So if you've got a MasterCard, try and find the MasterCard symbols and keep it neat. Be very careful to make sure that you pull the card out of the machine. with a receipt. Sometimes you can get receipts and sometimes you don't. But I've got caught with that only once in Laos and it ate my card.

**Kelley McCarthy:** And on that note, I would always suggest if you are relying on just using your card, make sure you have two forms of withdrawing money, whether it's from a credit card or an ATM card. For example, I got hacked the first day I landed here this trip. This trip. And I'll be honest, it's the first time in the 18 years I've been coming here I've ever had my credit card hacked in Vietnam. And who's to say it was Vietnam? You know, these companies sell numbers these days, so it could have been just a coincidence. So, I had to cancel that card immediately and then start using my ATM card if I needed money, which with that debit option now, it's just like a credit card, so it hasn't really been a problem. But make sure you've got two forms of withdrawing money.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yes, definitely. I always travel with two cards. And you can actually look at different travel money cards. So, it's just for travel and you can put the currency of your own country on it. Very few of the travel money cards would carry Vietnamese dong, but certainly I put Australian dollars and then of course it gives me dong when I get here. So, I use that as a second backup should something like what happened with Kelley when she first arrived. Look, everyone, I hope you've got a lot out of this show. I know we've enjoyed exploring Saigon in the last few days and probably going a little bit deeper than I normally would. But also, I hope that you're going to stick with the show as we get further about. Kelley and I took the opportunity to go to Ho Tram, which is about a two-hour trip from Saigon. And that was really lovely. And we've got some fun to share with you on that coming up. And of course, I've got many other places in this whole series. So, please watch out for our social pages, WhatAboutVietnam, TikTok, social media, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, all of the ones you normally use. And just thanks for supporting the program.

**Kelley McCarthy:** Before we go Kerry, I just want to mention to everybody that please note we haven't been paid by any of our mentions today. It has all been funded out of our own back pockets and today I return back to Australia to take up my day job for my next return trip here. So, we aren't paid by any sponsors, but you know, feel free to drop some money if you really want us to come back and do some research for you. Just reach out to Kerry, see where that deposit can go, we're open to that too.

**Kerry Newsome:** Yeah, I love your work Kelley, absolutely. We do this because we love this and we love this country and this country's been very good to both of us and we love what we do. Definitely. So, see you next time people and thanks again.