

UPTOWN

THE MUSIC AND FASHION ISSUE

Fall Fashion

*Sensual,
Confident
& Sexy*

**SUPERSTAR
STYLISTS
SOUND OFF**

**VIETNAM:
FAR EAST
OPULENCE**

**ANTHONY
ANDERSON
BOLD &
BLACK-ISH**

**JAZMINE
SULLIVAN
SHE'S BEEN
DRINKIN'**

+

**THE GIRL
MISSY
ELLIOTT
WANTS
YOU TO
KNOW**



Vietnam



Rising

Vietnam, once only known by Americans for the devastating war that ended 40 years ago, is now one of the world's most popular luxury locales. UPTOWN Editor-in-Chief Isoul Harris gives the lowdown on a few of his favorite five-star properties.



SOFITEL LEGEND METROPOLE HANOI

Getting There

Cathay Airlines is one of the top carriers in the world and when travelling to Vietnam, the ease and comfort of business class is priceless. The airline offers daily non-stop service from eight North American gateways (Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Newark, New York JFK, San Francisco, Toronto and Vancouver) to Hong Kong, where a connection with sister airline Dragonair will transport you to Vietnam's top cities: Da Nang, Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh City.

While waiting for your connection, enjoy The Wing: the airline's flagship lounge, situated high above the terminal with open ceilings and unobstructed views, is regarded as one of the best in the world (think endless cham-

pagne, delicious hot and cold fare and luxurious shower suites). Voted "The Best Transpacific Airline of 2014" by Skytrax World Airline Awards, Cathay is the only airline in the world to win this award four times—19 million travellers that voted all agree.

Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

The Metropole is the first in the Sofitel collection to gain the "Legend" distinction. Since opening in 1901, this 5-star French-Colonial style hotel has hosted celebrities such as Graham Greene, Charlie Chaplin, Jane Fonda, Mick Jagger, President Bill Clinton, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt and many more. The property is split into two wings, each with their own distinct personalities: the Metropole wing is the original space (harken-

ing back to the early 1900's with French classical finishings and Vietnamese nuances). Choose between Luxury and Grand Luxury suites—(the former with slightly more space, an additional room and daybed). The Opera Wing is the modern side with neo-classical luxury. The 5 suite types range from premium to Grand Prestige—the top tier accommodations of the hotel.

Vietnam is known for its adventurous and flavorful food and, so be sure to indulge in the street bites and abundance of top restaurants. However, the hotel options are great as well. Le Beaulieu is known for its celebrated wine list, Angelina (also a local hotspot) serves rich Italian eats and for traditional Vietnamese cuisine, book a reservation at Spice Garden and experience a toothsome mix of dishes from the north and south regions. The hotel is also steeped in history. In 2011, a wartime bunker was discovered in the back of the garden and is available for a tour (warning, it is not for the claustrophobic).

Walking is the best way to experience the city. Stroll from the hotel to Hoan Kiem Lake (where you will likely notice couples outfitted for weddings surrounding the lake, taking photos months before the ceremony; it's a popular tradition). Also check out the Old Quarter—it's Hanoi of a bygone era. Shop for gifts at Dong Xuan Market; visit the temples and pagodas in the surround area; or simply grab a Beer Hoi on Ta Hien Street and sit out and drink while people watching. You'll feel like a local. *Sofitel.com/Hanoi*



CATHAY AIRLINES BUSINESS CLASS



THE NAM HAI HOI AN

The Nam Hai Hoi An

The Nam Hai must be the most stunning resort in all of Vietnam. With expert design based on the principles of Feng Shui, you first encounter the gorgeous infinity pool that seemingly extends into Ha My Beach, the breathtaking coastline on which the 100 villas making up this property lie. Recalling the touches of the old world Vietnamese garden house, each villa features an elevated platform bed in the center of the room. The Restaurant serves a decadent breakfast spread that's only heightened by the view of the enormous infinity pool and Ha My Beach. And The Beach Restaurant serves casual fare for lunch and midday, while transforming its nightly menu into one full of traditional and innovative Vietnamese dishes. Enjoy the official tour of the property and take a solo stroll along the beach basking in the early morning sunrise or evening sunset. Ride one of the complimentary bicycles to the spa (where the treatment rooms are also villas, albeit atop water in a pond). Arrive early: the more time you have at this space the better.

Take advantage of the hotel's shuttle service to the ultra-charming ancient port city of Hoi An, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Vietnam has a large motorbike culture—being that cars are too expensive for most of the Vietnamese—however, from 3-9pm there are

no motorbikes allowed in the Ancient City. Therefore, spend a morning or afternoon walking: visit the Chinese temples, merchant house or the countless expert tailors waiting to customize a garment or accessory. While tourism traps do exist in the form of souvenir shops and boutiques, if you continue past them, walking farther in, you'll discover more beauty and fun excursions (such as bicycling or boating). On the 14th of each month, the lights are turned off and are replaced by the warm radiance from Hoi An's signature silk lanterns. **Foodie Alert:** While in Hoi An, order Cau Lau—a dish made of locally-sourced greens, thin slices of pork, noodles, cilantro, basil, mint and water drawn from Hoi An's ancient wells. ghmhotels.com/en/nam-hai

La Residence Hue Hotel & Spa

Leaving Hoi An, hire a driver and make the scenic 3-hour trek on Hwy 1 to Hue. Be sure to stop and climb the Hai Van Pass on National Route 1A—the views of the mountains, valleys and ocean view are breathtaking.

Once in Hue, check-in to the lovely La Residence Hue Hotel & Spa (La-residence-hue.com), overlooking the Perfume River. Originally built as a private, government residence in the 1930s, La Residence became a hotel shortly after 1975 and struggled as a 3-star



LA RESIDENCE HUE HOTEL & SPA

property until the early 2000s when it was purchased by a group who not only renovated but built additional wings based on the original structure. Today, the boutique hotel (only 122 rooms) is one of the top three hotels in Hue. Take one of the complimentary bicycles and ride over to the gargantuan Forbidden City. The traffic in Hue is a bit terrifying, but braving it on a bike is exhilarating. See the massive Citadel. If lucky, witness the monks chanting at the Thien Ma Pagoda (Heavenly Lady) which is over 400 years old.

Vietnam's history is both magnificent and tragic, but the Vietnamese people refrain from focusing on the past. With hardly any ill feelings towards US citizens over "The American War", they welcome everyone with open minds and hearts. Plan away: beauty, history and luxury awaits.