

WE ASK +852'S WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS:

What has been the most surprising meal you've enjoyed while travelling?

致《+852》撰稿人與攝影師：

旅行期間，您品嚐過的哪一頓餐點最令您喜出望外？



Joshua Zukas

WRITER

作者

Ride a Honda Cub through HCMC's 24 districts in 24 hours, p30

第30頁《本田小狼穿梭胡志明市：24小時遊歷24區》

"HCMC is home to Vietnam's most vibrant enclave of Japanese restaurants in alley 15B Le Thanh Ton, and fortunately my photographer knows it better than anyone. He took me to MutaHiro, which serves a chicken broth-based bowl of ramen that rivalled anything I've tasted in Japan."

「胡志明市的15B Le Thanh Ton小巷裡，匯聚越南最熱鬧的多間日本料理餐廳。幸好我的隨行攝影師非常熟悉該處，他帶我到MutaHiro品嚐該店的雞湯拉麵，其味道與我於日本吃過的任何拉麵不相伯仲。」



Katy Wong

WRITER

作者

5 neighbourhood stops, p14

第14頁《五大推介好地方》

"In Shikoku, after enjoying a long, relaxing soak in a traditional hot spring, I headed to a Japanese-style restaurant with tatami mat flooring and was served a kaiseki meal that included Wagyu beef, local vegetables and a tiny hotpot. It all came perfectly paired with sake."

「有一次於日本四國泡浸完傳統溫泉後，身心舒暢的我去到一間鋪有榻榻米地墊的日式餐廳進餐，他們供應的懷石料理包含和牛牛肉、當地土產蔬菜和一道迷你火鍋，每款菜餚都配上日本清酒一同品嚐。」



Algirdas Bakas

PHOTOGRAPHER

攝影師

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第43頁《本幫之味》

"While out on assignment for this month's issue of +852, I was blown away by the quality of the organic corn at BioFarm. I was not expecting such fresh, amazing flavour from corn that was plucked right in the middle of Shanghai. It tasted so surprisingly good that I had to ask for one more!"

「今期為《+852》採訪文章時，我到訪了百歐歡有機生態農場，他們種植的有機粟米品質極佳，令我非常驚訝。我沒想到在上海市區內可以採摘到那麼新鮮味美的粟米。實在太好吃了，我甚至多摘一條！」

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Ride a 本田小狼穿梭胡志明市 **Honda Cub** through



Ho Chi Minh City's

24小時遊歷24區 24 districts in 24 hours



With a population of 13 million, Ho Chi Minh City is Southeast Asia's emerging mega-city. Can writer **Joshua Zukas** cover all 24 districts in just 24 hours on a 50-year-old motorbike?

胡志明市人口達1,300萬，是東南亞的新晉超級城市。究竟本文作者 **Joshua Zukas** 能否騎著一輛擁有近乎50年歷史的仿古電單車，於24小時內遊遍當地24區呢？

Photos by **Mervin Lee**

push down on the kickstart for what feels like the 20th time, but nothing happens. I try again, and the bike spits back some muffled spluttering but little else. There are four generations gawping at me, including a toddler sitting on the frail lap of his great-grandfather. Both their expressions say the same thing: “You can do it!” I finally kick life into the bike, a moment that’s met with energetic clapping and thumbs up from the crowd.

My loveable turquoise 1972 Honda Cub and I are buried down an alleyway in District 11, a residential corner of Ho Chi Minh City’s bulging Chinatown. My belly is filled with black chicken soup, har gao and siu mai – delicacies you’d be hard pressed to find anywhere else in the country. It’s approaching midnight, and I’m halfway through an unthinkable challenge: to explore all of Ho Chi Minh City’s 24 districts in just 24 hours.

“It’s impossible,” said Nguyen Thi Kieu Ngan, founder of The Honda Cub Exchange and owner of this bike, earlier in the day. “But I look forward to seeing you try.” She’s probably right, I thought to myself. Ho Chi Minh City is over 100km long at its widest point and also Vietnam’s biggest city by population. And the bike is 15 years older than me.

Nevertheless, most would agree it’s still the best way to get around the city. The distances are too great for non-motorised transport, while cumbersome cars struggle with

the tight alleys and makeshift bridges. The motorbike is king of this concrete jungle, and I couldn’t ask for a more iconic companion than a Honda Cub, the model that started the country’s motorbike addiction over half a century ago, when South Vietnam was still a country, and Saigon its capital (the name changed after reunification in 1975). Today, there are upwards of seven million registered motorbikes in Ho Chi Minh City, according to the Department of Transport.

Still, 24 districts in 24 hours is quite a challenge. The plan involves starting mid-day in the centre and finishing at the same time on day two at the Honda Cub Exchange in District 9, on the city’s easternmost end. This approach covers most of the city on the first day, capturing all of the southern, eastern and central districts. Barring obstacles, this means 16 districts before bed, leaving eight for the following morning, when I’ll get up early and head as far north as I can before looping back and heading east.

But first, a confession. I’ve been coming to Ho Chi Minh City for over a decade but it’s never captured my heart. Hanoi captivates with its 1,000-year history. Hue delights with its traditional and laid-back lifestyle. And if I want something modern, Danang is cleaner, less congested and boasts a beach. How can Ho Chi Minh City compete? My hope is that this mission will shed light on a city that I haven’t given enough attention to.



Clockwise from top:
Nha Be; Mong
Bridge; writer and
kids playing with the
Cub in Can Gio

順時針頂圖起：
茹敏縣一景；彩虹橋；
本文作者邀請芹蔴縣的
小孩坐上其本田小狼
電單車上玩耍

我

踩下腳踏好像第20次了，但電單車仍然不為所動。我再嘗試一下，它吐出了低沉的噗噗聲，但僅此而已。四代同堂的一家盯視著我，嬰孩坐在曾祖父瘦弱的大腿上，兩人的表情不約而同地表示：「你可以的！」我最終成功發動引擎，發出轟隆巨響，圍觀的群眾熱烈地為我拍掌和豎起拇指。

我的1972年藍綠色本田小狼電單車外型討好，我駛著它沿第十一郡的小街前進，那裡是胡志明市大型唐人街的住宅區。我的肚皮圓圓的，盛載著之前品嚐的烏雞湯、蝦餃和燒賣，這些美食在越南其他地區不太容易找到。午夜時分即將來到，而我只完成一項艱鉅挑戰的一半：在24小時之

內，探索胡志明市全部24區。

「這是不可能的事。」Nguyen Thi Kieu Ngan說。她是本田小狼買賣平台的創辦人，也是這輛電單車的主人。「但我很期待你一嘗這項挑戰。」我心裡在想，或許她說得沒錯。胡志明市最寬點超過100公里，也是全越南人口最多的城市，那輛電單車則比我年長15歲。

儘管如此，多數人都會同意這是周遊市內的最佳方法。房車太笨重，未能駛進狹窄的小巷和臨時搭建的橋。電單車則是這片混凝土森林的路上王者，而本田小狼正是當地最具代表性的名字。

然而，要在24小時內遊遍24區，依然是一項巨大挑戰。我計劃於第一天中午在市中心起程，

翌日在同樣時間回到東面第九郡的本田小狼買賣平台，結束是次旅程。我會在第一天遊歷市內大部分區域，包括南部、東部和中部。如果計劃順利，我便可在睡覺前完成16區，把餘下八區留待翌日早上。到了第二天，我會提早起床，盡量朝北邁進，最後折返東區。但先旨聲明，雖然我在十多年前已開始前來胡志明市遊覽，但從來沒有愛上此地。河內的千年歷史使我深深著迷，而順化市的傳統悠閒生活也教人陶醉。如果我想體驗現代化生活，峴港是一個整齊清潔的城市，沒那麼擁擠，又有美麗的海灘。胡志明市又怎及得上它們？然而，我希望今次的旅程，能夠讓我對過去忽略了胡志明市改觀。



Stage 1: Getting a grip on diverse landscapes

The adventure begins at midday with a visit to Gustave Eiffel's Mong Bridge (Cau Mong) in District 4. The French engineer is better known for the Long Bien Bridge in Hanoi (or, indeed, the Eiffel Tower), but this first stop frames the tension between the centre's colonial past and glitzy future. Dilapidated French houses sit beside modern towers south of the bridge, while views north reveal the modern Bitexco Financial Tower overshadowing the colonial State Bank Building – an emblematic scene of the urban development to come.

District 4 looms large in the city's history as the location of Dragon Wharf, an important commercial port during colonial times. These days it's calm, having been eclipsed decades ago by modern counterparts farther from the centre. A large 19th-century administrative building now houses the Ho Chi Minh Museum (1 Nguyen Tat Thanh), and is enveloped by quiet grassy lawns that contrast with the city's urban melee.

My trusty Cub beckons, its retro curves popping confidently in the sunlight as if to tell me its raring to go. From here it's a long journey south, but the Cub powers through

District 7, one of the city's Korean quarters with barbecue restaurants and bingsu cafés, and Nha Be, a rural district with more green than grey.

By 2pm my bike and I are at the ferry crossing to Can Gio, Ho Chi Minh City's largest and southernmost district that evokes the Mekong Delta provinces like Ben Tre and Vinh Long. Disembarking on the other side, the cramped city centre feels a world away. Thirst pushes me to hunt out a cold coconut – a quintessential Mekong Delta refreshment – with a view back to the city across the water. I get the view, but not the coconut, and instead meet a gaggle of children keen to play with the Cub. The lack of coconut cafés suggests that few visitors make it this far.

On the ferry back I get chatting to 51-year-old Nguyen Duc Tho, a resident of Nha Be who surprises me by saying that he's seen little advancement in this part of the city over the past few decades. "Nha Be needs a good port – it's the only way for the district to develop," he offers, perched on his motorbike and talking at me throughout the 20-minute journey. He's gesticulating passionately, with a gold chain and several large rings on his chubby fingers. "Can Gio, on the other hand, should focus on tourism." He's referring to the Can Gio Mangrove, a UNESCO-recognised biosphere reserve at the extreme end of the district, home to king cobras, crocodiles and pelicans.

第一階段：認識多元化都市環境

歷險旅程由中午開始，首先參觀居斯塔夫艾菲爾在第四郡建造的彩虹橋。這位法國工程師以河內的龍編橋為個人代表作（當然還有巴黎的艾菲爾鐵塔），但今天的首站景點，便呈現了胡志明市中心在殖民地歷史和耀眼未來之間的張力。在彩虹橋以南，破舊的法式房屋旁邊有著摩登高樓。至於橋的北面就是高聳入雲的金融塔，相比之下，殖民地時代的越南國家銀行顯得特別矮小——眼前的景象標誌著胡志明市的都市化發展。

第四郡也是龍碼頭的所在地，它是殖民地時代一個重要的商業碼頭，突顯該區於胡志明市歷史裡的地位。一個世紀前，該碼頭業務頻繁，但數十年前已被遠離市中心的現代化設施取代，如今氣氛平靜。一座建於19世紀的大型行政建築，現已成為胡志明紀念館（地址：1 Nguyen Tat Thanh），四周是幽靜的青草地，與市內的煩囂截然不同。

我那輛可靠的本田小狼正在呼喚著我：懷舊的流線形車身在陽光下特別耀眼，恍如示意它渴望繼續旅程。從這裡開始，就是一段漫長的南下之旅，小狼勇往直前，穿越第七郡，即是韓國區的所在地，該區開滿了韓式燒烤餐廳和刨冰店，途中也經過綠意盈盈的鄉郊縣分茹舨縣，暫時離開灰濛濛的城市。

下午二時，我帶著電單車乘坐渡輪前往芹蔴縣。那裡位於胡志明市南端，是市內面積最大的地區，附近就是湄公河三角洲的省份，如檳榔省和永隆省。我在對岸下船時，擠擁的城市彷彿離我千萬里遠。更令我感到不可思議的是，胡志明市還有足足40公里才觸及海岸。我想找個當地特產——冰凍椰青來解渴，並回頭觀賞對岸的市景。風景是不錯，但我一個椰青都找不到，只有好奇的雞群走到小狼電單車旁邊。這裡欠奉椰子飲品店，證明大部分遊客不會走到這麼遠。

坐渡輪回程時，我和51歲的茹舨縣居民Nguyen Duc Tho談起來。他說該區數十年來發展遲



Stage 2: Getting under the skin of Chinatown

Speeding back to the city and heading slightly west, I clip the rural district of Binh Chanh and drive through the outskirts of Chinatown in District 8 before delving into its heart: District 5. This is Ho Chi Minh City's best-known Chinese enclave, where shophouses line the streets and a smattering of French colonial houses evoke Hanoi's Old Quarter. Chinese characters are written everywhere, indicating that this is a good place to hunt out the Chinese food for which Ho Chi Minh City is famed. At 4pm this lands me at To Ky (36 Go Cong), which has been serving up *hu tieu sa te* (noodles with deer meat in a sweet peanut sauce) for over 60 years.

As I hungrily slurp up the sweet noodles, the 68-year-old owner, To Tin Hao, limps into the restaurant. He's gentle-faced and delighted to see me enjoying a recipe that he learnt from his father. Born in Vietnam to Chinese parents, To is comfortable in both Vietnamese and Mandarin. "There's been so much change, mainly to do with infrastructure," he says, talking of the decades of development he's seen since his childhood.

During early colonial times, this area was known as Cholon and it operated as a distinct city. It wasn't until the 1930s that Cholon combined with Saigon to form a single city, Saigon-Cholon, and it was here that

To was born. Cholon was officially dropped from the city name in 1956. "The big roads mean that we are so much more connected to the rest of the city," To adds. These days, the roads To is referring to make it impossible to know where District 1 (central Saigon) stops and District 5 (central Cholon) begins.

After finishing the last noodle, I head west through District 6 passing the recently refurbished Binh Tay Market (57a Thap Muoi), one of many large dry goods market buildings in Chinatown.

Stage 3: Balancing tradition and modernity

By sticking to the back alleys, I arrive in neighbouring Binh Tan in no time. This is a new part of the city that's rejected the grit, grime and traffic of Chinatown in favour of order and cleanliness. At 6pm the sun is beginning to set, and it's a gentle drive through spacious tree-lined streets that feel like they belong in one of Vietnam's newer cities. The Cub purrs triumphantly as I accelerate out of each corner, relishing the lack of congestion and higher speeds. The Saigonese

緩，令我頗感驚訝。「茹陂縣需要一個良好的港口，這是讓區內發展的唯一方法。」他坐在電單車上，在20分鐘船程期間向我滔滔不絕地發表意見。「不過另一方面，芹蔴縣應該集中發展旅遊業。」他指的是位於縣內最末端並且獲得聯合國教科文組織列為生物圈的芹蔴紅樹林，那裡是眼鏡王蛇、鱷魚和塘鵝的棲息地。

第二階段：深入探索唐人街

我驅車返回城市，稍往西面邁進另一個鄉郊地區平政縣，再穿越第八郡的唐人街邊陲，然後深入唐人街的心臟地帶：第五郡。這是胡志明市最著名的華人社區，街道上店屋林立，還有少數的法國殖民地時代房屋，略帶河內舊城區的風情。區內到處都是中文字，證明是搜羅胡志明市著名中式美食的好地方。下午四時，我來到蘇記潮州沙嗲（地址：36 Go Cong），該店專營鹿肉沙嗲麵已有60餘年。

饑腸轆轤的我大嚼香口惹味的麵條，同時間，現年68歲的店主To Tin Hao步履蹣跚地走進店內。他生於越南一個華人家庭，越南文和中文都懂。談及自孩提時代以來數十年的市內發展，他說：「變化可大了，主要是基礎設施上的改變。」

殖民地時代初期，這區舊稱堤岸，當時是一個獨立的城鎮。直至1930年代，堤岸才與西貢合併成為一個城市，名為「西貢堤岸」，也就是To Tin Hao的出生地。到了1956年，堤岸正式從市名中剔除。他補充說：「這裡興建了一些大型道路，意味著我們與市內其他地區更緊密地連繫起



Left to right:
Noodles with deer
meat in a sweet
peanut sauce at
To Ky; Cholon street
scene

左至右：
蘇記潮州沙嗲的鹿肉
沙嗲麵；堤岸一帶的
街景一隅

increase in innovative cafés in recent years. I settle on Gian Giao Café (141 Hoang Van Thu) for that elusive coconut, attracted by the creative use of corrugated plastic roofing, red scaffolding and lush green plants.

Stage 4: The city that never sleeps

It's 9pm and I'm hungry. Phu Nhuan touches both central Saigon and the northern part of Chinatown. Keen to explore these last few Chinese neighbourhoods, I head along the lively canal of District 3, humming with chattering locals at bars and cafés. I then drop into District 10 and pass the elegantly lit Quoc Tu Pagoda (224 Ba Thang Hai), built in 1963, before tucking into another Chinese meal at Duong Thanh (64 Phan Xich Long) in District 11.

At 11pm Ho Chi Minh City is still buzzing, flaunting its reputation as the only city in

來。」直到今天，他口中提及的道路，已經把第一郡（西貢中部）和第五郡（堤岸中部）完全連接起來。

吃完麵，我經過第六郡往西面走，途經最近翻新完成的平西市場（地址：57A Thap Muoi）——唐人街一個大型乾貨市場。

第三階段：傳統與現代的平衡

我沿著後巷蜿蜒前進，不消一會就到達鄰近的平新郡。這個新市區沒有唐人街的雜亂和交通擠塞，相對上整潔得多。傍晚六時，太陽開始下山，我在平緩寬闊的林蔭道路上驅車，彷彿置身越南的新型城市。每逢轉彎後加速，小狼都會發出歡欣的聲響，享受著順暢的路面和高速的快感。對於當地居民來說，平新郡與美輪美奐的Aeon Mall（地址：1, Road 17A）劃上等號，故此我直奔這座日本大型購物中心，然後才返回市中心。

我在新富郡稍停下來，參觀高聳的Phap Van寶塔（地址：16 Le Thuc Hoach），數以百計的善信當時正在準備迎接一星期後的盂蘭節。寶塔的宗教氣氛濃厚，與Aeon Mall的繁忙景象形成有趣的對比，也展現了該市擁抱現代發展，但不會犧牲傳統文化的態度。我繼續向東前往平新郡，這是市內機場的所在地，但該機場已超出負荷。其後我向下駛至富潤郡，近年該區的創意咖啡店數目漸增。我到Gian Giao咖啡店（地址：141 Hoang Van Thu）喝那久違了的椰子飲品。

associate Binh Tan with the sparkling Aeon Mall (1, Road 17A) so I make a beeline for the Japanese commercial centre before looping back around towards the centre.

In Tan Phu, I make a stop at the skyscraper pagoda of Phap Van (16 Le Thuc Hoach) where hundreds of worshippers prepare for the Hungry Ghost Festival, which begins in a week. The religious scene is in satisfying contrast to the commercial bustle of Aeon Mall, and provides a window into the attitude of the city: eager to modernise, but not at the expense of tradition. I continue east to Tan Binh, dominated by the city's overloaded airport before dropping down into Phu Nhuan, which has witnessed an



WHAT IS THE HONDA SUPER CUB?

The Honda Super Cub is the world's best-selling vehicle that you probably haven't heard of. The iconic Japanese motorcycle was launched in 1958 and made waves with its 1963 American ad campaign – “You meet the nicest people on a Honda” – which attracted ire from macho US bikers. The Cub's designers were inspired by compact European mopeds that could be used and maintained without special mechanical knowledge or hard-to-find parts. The goal was to create a motorcycle for everyone. Since then, the Super Cub has been adopted so widely in Vietnam that “Honda” is used interchangeably with the word for motorcycle taxi: xe om (they don't even require a license to ride). You can find one at The Honda Exchange (thehonda67andcubfactory.com), which sells them locally and overseas.

甚麼是「本田小狼」？

本田小狼是世上最暢銷的陸上交通工具。這輛標誌性的日本電單車於1958年面世，憑藉1963年一則美國廣告引起萬眾注目——其廣告口號為「本田上的人最善良瀟灑」，令美國不少陽剛電單車迷怒火中燒。本田小狼的用戶毋須擁有特別的機械知識，也能輕易駕駛和保養這款電單車，同時也沒有難以搜購的零件。它成為了汽車史上最備受寵愛的車款之一，並且於越南大行其道，而「本田」也成為「電單車的士」的代名詞。你可於The Honda Exchange (thehonda67andcubfactory.com) 購買這款電單車。

Vietnam that never sleeps. I do sleep, however, and after almost 12 hours of driving I need it more than ever. Satisfied with visiting 16 out of the 24 districts, I head back to District 1, deposit my bike, and head to Firkin (20 Mac Thi Buoi) for a well-deserved cocktail. There, Australian co-founder Andy O'Brien, who's been living in Ho Chi Minh City for a decade, talks to me about how he's seen the city develop. "Ten years ago, there were very few options to go out," he explains, casually dressed in shorts and a baseball cap. "But I've seen an explosion of restaurants and bars, particularly in the last three or four years. It's a different game now." He's right that there was a myriad of bars for me to choose from, but with smooth beats emanating from the speakers and gentle lighting allowing my eyes some rest, Firkin is the ideal spot for a much-needed nightcap.

Stage 5: Expats in the east

I'm up at 6am the next day, the sun is shining and I'm itching to get going. The Cub is too, apparently, as it starts with a welcoming growl after the first kick. I head north to Binh Thanh, one of Ho Chi Minh City's most underrated districts. The neighbourhood is leafy and local with children playing in the street and mothers doing their morning shopping. I need a jolt to get through the next few hours, so I park myself at a café that doubles as a plant shop (79/20 Pham Viet Chanh). I order a *ca phe sua da* (coffee with ice and condensed milk) and allow the caffeine and sugar to work their magic.

Coffee was introduced to the country during the French colonial period, but the Vietnamese have since made it their own, and café culture is as strong here as it is in Italy or Australia. Surrounded by vegetation with a reel of local scenes unfolding before my eyes, it's difficult to tear myself away, but the promise of a delicious breakfast helps. I feel like *bun thit nuong* (grilled pork with noodles) and head to 12c Ngo Tat To, but it's closed so opt for *com tam* (grilled pork with broken rice) at 43 Nguyen Van Lac instead.

I move onto District 2 to explore Ho Chi Minh City's enclave of Western expats: Thao



店內裝潢創意無窮，以膠板搭建天花板，並綴以紅色棚架和茂盛的綠色植物。

第四階段：城市不夜天

晚上九時，我肚餓了。富潤郡毗連西貢中部和唐人街北部。我很希望探索其餘幾個華人社區，所以前往朝氣洋溢的第三郡水道一帶，那裡的酒吧和咖啡店聚滿談笑風生的本地人。然後我轉往第十郡，途經建於1963年並且燈光優雅的國寺（地址：224 Ba Thang Hai），接著再到第十一郡的楊城嫩品（地址：64 Phan Xich Long）吃一頓中國菜。

晚上11時，胡志明市仍然一派熱鬧景象，炫耀著越南不夜城的美譽。不過，我需要休息了，尤其是在路上駕駛了接近12小時。

今天我遊歷了24區的其中16個，深感滿足地回到第一郡，泊好電單車，然後前往Firkin（地址：20 Mac Thi Buoi）喝杯雞尾酒獎勵自己。澳洲人Andy O'Brien是Firkin的其中一位創辦人，在胡志明市生活了十年，他告訴我該市的發展經過：「回想十年前，外出消遣的選擇很少。但其後，特別是最近三四年，餐廳和酒吧如雨後春筍般出現，市況截然不同。」他說得沒錯，那裡的確有很多酒吧可供選擇，但Firkin始終是睡前喝一杯的理想地點。店內瀰漫著柔和的節奏，輕柔的燈光也容許我雙眼稍作休息。

第五階段：活在東方的西方人

翌日早上六時我便起了床，外面陽光普照，讓我恨不得快點起

Top: Mixologists working the bar at Firkin

上圖：
Firkin酒吧的調酒師
埋首工作

“You might find grander architecture, superior cuisine and urban charm elsewhere in Vietnam, but nowhere can surprise like Ho Chi Minh City”

你可以在越南其他地方找到更宏偉的建築、更優秀的美饌和更迷人的都市氣息，但是只有胡志明市能夠給你無盡驚喜

Dien. With potholed roads and empty plots, the neighbourhood is awkward to drive through and feels unfinished. But with spacious villas and swimming pools, the uncluttered residential appeal is understandable. I'm big on eating fresh tropical fruit in the morning so I head to L'Herbanyste (215E4 Nguyen Van Huong) for a smoothie bowl and meet co-founder Adrien de Calvairac. "It's like day and night," he says in a thick French accent, reflecting on Thao Dien's past. "When I arrived [in 2003], there were just a few houses to rent and nothing else. No bars. No shops. No supermarkets."

As I leave L'Herbanyste, it starts to drizzle, evolving quickly into one of the city's infamous rain storms, making driving hazardous. At 9am I ground myself in Dolphy Café (28 Thao Dien), order my second coffee of the morning – a cappuccino – and wait for the downpour to stop. It doesn't, dashing my hopes of a northern loop through the four green residential districts of Cu Chi, Hoc Mon, District 12 and Go Vap. I'm disappointed, but find solace knowing that getting stuck by the rain is also a quintessential Saigon experience.

After two hours, it finally lets up, leaving me an hour for the last two districts. I visit the One Pillar Pagoda (100 Dang Van Bi) in Thu Duc, a 1950s replica of the iconic 1,000-year-old structure in Hanoi, before

Right: Café that doubles as a plant shop

右圖：
一間兼營植物店的咖啡廳

dropping off my Cub at The Honda Cub Exchange in District 9, the largest and least developed numbered district, by midday.

Sitting in a cab heading back to District 1 allows me to reflect on my journey. After a whirlwind 24 hours, has my appreciation for the city increased? I think it has, but not for the expected reasons. You might find grander architecture, superior cuisine and urban charm elsewhere in Vietnam, but nowhere can surprise like Ho Chi Minh City.

Despite my meticulous plan (that ultimately failed), the secret to enjoying the city is probably not to have one. There are no dull districts and few dull moments, which means diverse experiences with an easygoing population to grease the wheels. I'm disappointed not to have completed the mission, but 20 out of 24 ain't bad. In fact, I'm already thinking about my trip back to discover the final four.

程。小狼明顯也蠢蠢欲動，發出熱情的吼聲。我往北面一直駛，前往較少人注意的平盛郡。該個本地人社區綠葉成蔭，我在迎接未來數小時的挑戰之前，必須喝點甚麼來提提神，所以就將電單車停泊在一間咖啡店兼植物店前方（地址：79/20 Pham Viet Chanh）。我點了一杯越南咖啡，讓咖啡因和糖分發揮效力。

越南在法國殖民地時代引入咖啡，但是越南人演變出一套獨特風格，咖啡店文化跟意大利和澳洲一樣盛行。我身旁滿是茂盛的植物，街頭風景在我眼前展現，教我看如痴如醉，不過腦海中美味的早餐，最終成功讓我離開咖啡店。我很想吃烤豬肉米粉，所以就以12c Ngo Tat To為目的地，可惜該店是日休息，所以我轉移陣地至43 Nguyen Van Lac

吃烤豬肉碎米飯。

接著我前往第二郡，探索胡志明市的外國人社區Thao Dien。那裡的道路滿佈坑洞，也有不少空置的荒地，一路駕駛時感覺頗奇怪的，區內的建設工作也好像未完成。不過，該區環境清新，井井有條，建有大型別墅和泳池，難怪會吸引人們來居住。我喜歡在早上吃點熱帶鮮果，故此我特別前往L'Herbanyste（地址：215E4 Nguyen Van Huong）吃果昔碗，並與創辦人之一Adrien de Calvairac會面。「這裡的變化就像日與夜般強烈。」他一口濃重的法國口音，向我講述Thao Dien的變化進程。「當我（於2003年）來到這裡，只有幾間房屋供人租住，其餘甚麼也沒有。沒有酒吧、沒有商店，也沒有超級市場。直到最



近幾年，轉變可謂翻天覆地。」

我離開L'Herbanyste的時候，開始下起毛毛細雨，隨即更演變成當地惡名昭彰的暴雨。我在上午九時駛到Dolphy Café（地址：28 Thao Dien）避雨，點了今個早上第二杯咖啡，這次是意式泡沫咖啡，一邊喝一邊等待雨勢減弱。無奈雨一直下，讓我的北行計劃幻滅，未能遊歷糾支縣、旭門縣、第十二郡和舊邑郡四個綠化住宅區。但我樂觀地想，被雨天打斷行程也算是西貢特有的生活體驗。

天氣終於好轉過來，我還剩下一小時，完成旅程最後兩區。我參觀了守德郡的一柱寺（地址：100 Dang Van Bi），那是河內一座千年古寺的1950年代仿製建築。最後，我在中午前回到第九郡的本田小狼買賣平台還車，該郡是市內12郡之中最大但發展幅度最少的一區。

我乘坐的士返回第一郡。經過一場旋風式的24小時之旅後，我對這個城市的好感有否提升？我想是有的，但原因並非我意料之中。我仍然覺得，你可以在越南其他地方找到更宏偉的建築、更優秀的美饌和更迷人的都市氣息，但是只有胡志明市能夠給你無盡驚喜。儘管今次計劃周密（並失敗而回），但享受這個城市的秘訣，或許在於隨心漫遊。胡志明市沒有沉悶的地區，也鮮有枯燥乏味的時刻。能夠遊遍24個地區之中的20個，其實也算不錯。我已經急不及待再來一次，發掘餘下四個區域。

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