



VIETNAM:



Discover
the Tiger

« Introduction

Day Two - Hanoi, The Old Quarter »

Day One - Time of arrival: 4pm

June 6th, 2007 by ben

Palm trees lined the roadside beneath a seemingly endless procession of one-pillar billboards advertising VTB, Zidmac Steel, Sea Bank and others – Asian companies I've never heard of. Then rice paddies, dappled with shallow ponds, stretched to mountains in the distance - flat massive fields of luminescent tropical green tended by farmers in loose earthy attire wearing Vietnams famous conical straw hats.

I was on the outskirts of Hanoi, the sky was a deep blue, it was 37 degrees Celsius and I was making my way in air-conditioned luxury from the airport to the city. Made temporarily a rich man by my win, I had booked my hotel in advance and agreed to be picked up from the airport - name held up on a board, the whole bit.

For a lot of people Vietnam, unlike Thailand or India, doesn't rank high on the list of tourist destinations in Asia. Vietnam, politically, is still a communist country. In the last decade or two however it has well and truly plugged into the world market economy and opened up to tourism. I do have my fears that this relatively new travel destination may be a touch lacking in the backpacker, beer drinking party scene. But after gushing reports from travellers I met in South America and the consequent reading up on the place that followed, I have no doubt that what may be lacking on the western festivities front will well and truly be made up for with this countries rich culture, history, general chaos, delicious food, cheap, high quality shopping and phenomenal natural beauty.



There were swarms of motorcycles on every side of us, most wearing face masks like bandits, some, all post apocalyptic, with mad max style goggles and others with old style, bulbous, green military hats, like something out of an early 20th century safari movie. What looked like a 12-year old girl on a motor scooter rode past, her pink clad 12-year old friend smiling away on the back.

Nearing the city we passed a stilt open-air shack emerging from a pond in a rice field (palm trees behind). There were men sitting around on its elevated platform drinking beer under the shade of its bamboo framed roof...

Hanoi: arriving in the Old Quarter the heat and the chaos were intoxicating. I

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Hanoi: arriving in the Old Quarter the heat and the chaos were intoxicating. I booked into my hotel then jumped on the back of motorcycle taxi, cruising the streets in search of an ATM, UK-Vietnam power adaptor and food to feed my jet lagged, sleep deprived and slightly delirious soul – the very funky Highway 4 bar beautifully satisfied this requirement. Happily obligated to provide video content for my Tiger Beer sponsors I securely strapped my camera to my wrist, flicked on the video function and, weaving through the city streets, pressed record:



Or direct link is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R6bcl8RBbs>

This entry was posted on Wednesday, June 6th, 2007 at 1:45 pm and is filed under Day one. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

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