

## **Vietnam in 2008**

## **Overview**

This paper is a second part of the Vietnam History After Saigon Fall 1975 series. The first part of this series describes Vietnam from its birth through late ninety. This part will describe life in Vietnam in 21<sup>st</sup> century in the year 2008. After a nine years since the last visit to Vietnam there have been many progress, changes taking place in late ninety to present from economy to education, urban development, to social developments. Only three weeks staying in Vietnam one will not be able to adsorb all those changes. Thus, this part of the series will attempt to depict life in Vietnam through the eyes of a Vietnamese person, who is now living outside the country and come back to Vietnam one in a while, it may not cover all aspects of life in Vietnam. Suggestions and feedback are always welcomed.

## **Introduction**

The paper will describe life in Vietnam in 2008 in term of economic, social, literature, politics, and living conditions. Some will have pictures and images to illustrate while others are based on the author observations during the time staying in Vietnam. If possible more pictures will be added to this paper.

## **Year 2008**

### **Living Conditions**

One thing is obvious is that the living conditions in Vietnam in 2008 is getting better comparing to the lately eighty and ninety. For example, a middle class family in Saigon City has most of basic appliances from televisions, refrigerator, microwave and air conditioning. Most family now have cables to multiple channels including some paid-per-view channels with a very low monthly subscription due to the fact that the communicative system is controlled by the State and it is almost free to every one. The author does not know how the government pay for

all the paid cables to the foreign cable companies without charging back to the people. For example, most of family now has all the Disney' channels, English football premiership, boxing, etc on their TV's. Children & adults now can practice their English speaking and listening by simply watching American speaking movies like Disney channels.

In late eighty and ninety fashion design was unheard of for most of people but nowadays clothing lines, fashion design, models are everywhere in Saigon. Consumers are paying more attentions to the qualities and brand names. In ninety clothes are either from State factories, small private family businesses. Import clothes were usually second hand clothes from US and other countries. These second hand clothes called “quan ao sida” were sold along sidewalks throughout Saigon.

Though power outage is still a problem in Vietnam, especially new cities and suburbs area where electricity is still an issue, regular schedule for power outage in big cities like Saigon is not common any more. This is an improvement in quality of life. It is very hot during the summer time in Saigon. Without electricity people have to improvise and find a way to cool themselves such as sleeping out side their home during a summer night without electricity even if there would be likely their blanket would be disappeared in the next morning. However, Vietnam is still have many problems with powers and electricity. For example, in new suburb areas like Tan Phu power outage is still scheduled once a week and power will be out for few hours. Another problem with electricity is the cost. Cost of electricity in Vietnam is too high per living cost per average person. For instance, the electricity cost per month in Saigon is almost the same as in US even if the living quota in Vietnam is still 10 times below that of US.

While riding bicycle is a sport in western countries and US, it was a main transportation in Vietnam in eighty and ninety. Nowadays, bicycles have been replaced by scooters and motorcycles. Bicycles are now still a transportation mean for young kids and poor families who

cannot afford to buy motorcycles. Though road congestion is a major issue in Vietnam (this issues will be discussed in detail in the next paragraph) wealthy families are buying imported cars from US, Japan as a way to display their wealthiness because driving a car in Saigon or a major city in Vietnam is not an easy task.

With traffic regulation is not well respected by drivers and too many bikes on the road, driving a car in Vietnam is very stressful and some time frustrated. For example, cars are always surrounded by motorcycles and drivers are constantly watch for careless motorcycles drivers who simple ignores all traffic rules and drive in front of the car with a speed of 5 or 10 miles per hours. Thus, driving a car in Saigon is dangerous because of the stop and go movement and constantly being harassed by careless motorcycle drivers. According to the statistic, Vietnam has one of of the highest traffic accident rate in the world. Most of the fatal accidents are due to head injuries.

#### Economic

Vietnam is no longer isolated from the outside world like North Korea, especially after the embargo was lifted and the normalization agreement with US as signed in early 2000.

#### Vietnam

Marketing is also progressing very well thank to the business privatization policies in early 21<sup>st</sup> century by Vietnamese government. Advertisement was unheard in ninety but it is everywhere nowadays. Advertisement Billboards can be seen everywhere in Saigon

which is free due to the to while an average teacher salary in ninety is between \$600,000 to one millions Vietnamese dong, the current average salary of a teacher is about one to three millions Vietnamese dong based on experience.

