

Dear Participant;

We are currently busy beginning rehearsals and making the final arrangements for the festival and are very excited to see you in a few weeks in Ho Chi Minh City. We have compiled the following information to help your stay here go smoothly.

*Exchange Rate:*

15,000 VN Dong = \$1 US

If you change \$100 bills the exchange rate is

\$100 US = 1,600,000

*Getting here:*

If all goes well Cuong or Dirk will pick you up at the airport. If not, you can take a taxi, which costs about 90,000 – 100,000 (\$5-\$6) from airport to hotel by taxi.

*Hotel Information:*

Location

Phoenix 74

74 Bui Vien

District 1 Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam

Phone – (848) 8370538

Room                      \$11 per night

    Includes              breakfast and air conditioning

*About Bui Vien and Food Costs*

Bui Vien is one of the central tourist areas. There are many affordable restaurants and bars in the area that serve a wide variety of food at a very reasonable price. The price for food ranges from \$1 for local food to \$4 for western food like pizza, pasta and so on. Dirk and Cuong will give you a map with a few restaurants that offer quality food at good prices when you arrive. For now it is good to budget \$10-\$20 a day for food depending on your tastes.

## *Getting Around*

Getting around HCMC is pretty easy. Taking a motor bike taxi is cheap and easy. The cost from the hotel to the conservatory is about 5,000 dong (\$0.3) and you can get to most places in District 1 (the downtown and main district) for about \$10,000 (\$0.6). Motor bike taxis will usually solicit you so they are very easy to find, some negotiation skills will be helpful.

## *Schedule*

- September 18, 9:00 – Press Conference at HCMC Conservatory – 112 Nguyen Du
- September 21, 20:00 – Opening Gala at the Residence of the Consulate General of the United States – We are still waiting to finalize this time and will let you know of any changes.
- September 24, 14:00 – 17:30 - Chamber Dress Rehearsal 1
- September 25, 8:30 – 11:45 - Orchestra Dress Rehearsal 2
- September 26, 9:00 – 11:00 - Open Discussion about new music. Hoang Quan will interview us in an informal discussion with a question and answer session with the audience. This is a good way to get to know the music community of HCMC.
- September 26, 14:00 – 16:15 - Final Student Concert Dress Rehearsal
- September 26, 20:00 - Student Concert
- September 27, 8:30 – 11:45 - Final Chamber Music Dress Rehearsal
- September 27, 20:00 - Chamber Concert
- September 28, 8:30 – 11:45 - Final Orchestra Dress Rehearsal
- September 28, 20:00 - Orchestra Concert

## *Things to Do*

We have compiled a list of some things to do while you are here.

### *In HCMC*

The Reunification Palace – On the grounds of the old US embassy they have turned the building into a museum about the reunification of Vietnam in 1975. A very beautiful building right in the heart of HCMC and half a block from the conservatory. Check out the restaurant on the rear side where they have cheap food and drinks.

The War Remnants Museum – Not too far away from the conservatory this is a museum dedicated to the Vietnam Conflict.

Ho Chi Minh City and Ho Chi Minh Campaign Museums – These museums are dedicated to the revolutionaries in the city.

National History Museum – This museum covers precolonial history of Vietnam.

Pagodas – There are a number of pagodas (temples) worth checking out.

Notre Dame and the Post Office – Two beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings from the French colonial period.

### *Tours*

Ho Chi Minh City Tour                      \$8

This is a full day tour which takes you to most of the important things to see in the city

Cu Chi Tunnels Half Day                      \$4 + \$5 entry

Go and see and hear about the history of the famous tunnels used to fight the Americans during the Vietnam Conflict.

Mekong Delta Day Tour                      \$8-\$10

There are a couple of different options for the Mekong Delta. They are easily booked the day before. Most of the tours that let you see how people of the Mekong Delta live. This includes food, bus and boat.

Mekong Delta Two Day Tour                      \$18

If you want to spend the weekend living and touring the delta this is possible. The price includes bus, boat, hotel entrance fees. If you would like to do this and not pay for your hotel room in HCMC during the night you are away let me know and I will arrange this for you.

On the first floor of Phoenix 74 there is An Phu Travel. This is a very reasonably priced travel agency, which can supply more information and details on trips.

We are looking forward to seeing you soon.

Safe travels,

Dirk Johan Stromberg and Do Kien Cuong