TOP END

**Continental Hotel**: one of the city’s most historic lodgings, was the setting for much of the action that aoccured in Graham Greene’s well-known novel *The quite American.* The hotel dates from the turn of the 19th century and received its last renovation in 1989, unfortunately at the hands of its current owner, Saigon Tourist

Phone No: 829 9201

Address: 132-134 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$55-130

**Rex Hotel**: a giant place, is another classic central hotel. Its ambience of mellowed kitsch dates from the time it put up US army officers. Amenities include a large gift shop, a tailor, a beauty parlour, massage, acupuncture and a small swimming pool on the 6th floor. There are great views from the rooftop veranda, which is decorated with caged birds and potted bonsai bushes shaped like animals

Phone No: 829 6043

Address: 141 Nguyen Hue, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: twins & suite US$70-550

**Caravelle Hotel**: is an emormous posh place that sits on a prime piece of real estate, once occupied by the Catholic Diocese of Saigon. It’s hands-down one of the most luxurious hotels in HCMC. Nonguests can swim in the hotel pool for US$10

Phone No: 823 4999

Address: 19 Lam Son Square, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$160-980++

**Majestic Hotel**: dates back to 1925. It is right on the Saigon River and following major renovations it can truly reclaim its title as one of the city’s most Majestic hotels. As one guest wrote: ‘The Majestic wins hands-down for class and bygone-days atmosphere

Phone No: 829 5514

Address: 1 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$70-130, suites US$150-220

**Grand Hotel**: on the corner of Dong Khoi street, is aptly named. This renovated land mark building is notable for its spacious suites with 4.5m-high ceilings and French windows. There is an indoor swimming pool and good massage service

Phone No: 823 0163

Address: 12 Ngo Duc Ke, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$45-220

**Saigon Prince Hotel**: has glittering, luxury rooms. Local expats say it has the best massage service in town. Its US$14 massage-sauna-Jacuzzi package (Monday to Friday) is decent value

Phone No: 822 2999

Address: 63 Nguyen Hue, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: twins US$80-200++

**Norfolk Hotel:** is an Australian joint venture and its popular with business travellers. All rooms boast satellite TV and a minibar. Rates include breakfast

Phone No: 829 5368

Address: 117 Le Thanh Ton, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: singles US$85-125++, twins US$100-140++

**New World Hotel**: is an enormous luxury tower near the Pham Ngu Lao district. The clientele tends to be mainly Chinese-speaking tour groups from Hong Kong and Taiwan, but anyone with hard currency is welcome

Phone No: 822 8888

Address: 76 Le Lai, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms from US$70, Presidential suite US$850

**Riverside Hotel**: very close to the Saigon River, is an old colonial building that has been renovated and now features a good restaurant and bar

Phone No: 822 4038

Address: 18 Ton Duc Thang, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: doubles US$40-120

**Renaissance Riveside Hotel**: is a new glitzy skyscraper. Don’t confuse it with the Riverside Hotel, which, as the name suggests, also overlooks the river. Nonguests can use the pool here for US$10

Phone No: 822 0033

Address: 8-15 Ton Duc Thang, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$90-155

**Hotel Sofitel Plaza Saigon**: has 291 rooms and is among the sleekest for HCMC’s posh hotels. There are two fine in-house restaurants, and L’Elysee Bar features live jazz and a delightful terrace. Nonguests can use the rooftop swimming pool for US$12

Phone No: 824 1666

Address: 17 Le Duan, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms from US$150, presidential suite US$1450

**MID-RANGE Pham Ngu Lao Area**

**Liberty 4 Hotel**: has nice rooms, but it’s questionable as to whether they’re worth the price. The hotel offers excellent views from its 9th- floor restaurant

Phone No: 836 5822

Address: 265 Pham Ngu Lao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: US$25-60

**Vien Dong Hotel**: is another large state-run place. Amenities include a rooftop restaurant and a night club.

Phone No: 8360 8098

Address: 275A Pham Ngu Lao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: single rooms US$25-55, twins US$30-60

**Metropole Hotel**: is a fancy Saigon Tourist place with a swimming pool

Phone No: 832 2019

Address: 148 Tran Hung Dao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$35-70

**Windsor Saigon Hotel**: a short walk south of Bui Vien street, has all amenities – including a white stretch Cadillac limo parked out front! There’s a pleasant rooftop garden café, and an excellent in-house bakery-deli offering pastries, fine wine, cheese and sausages

Phone No: 836 7889

Address: 193 Tran Hung Dao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: singles/doubles from US$90/95

**DONG KHOI AREA**

**Kim Do Hotel**: is a fancy place brought to you by Saigon Tourist

Phone No: 822 5914

Address: 133 Nguyen Hue, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: US$40-100

**Bong Sen Hotel**: affectionately called ‘The BS’ by travellers, is popular with business people

Phone No: 829 1516

Address: 117-123 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: twins with air-con US$50-180

**DISTRICT 3**

**Saigon Star Hotel**: next door, is also nice and features satellite TV, two restaurants and a coffee shop, a karaoke club and a business centre. Rates include breakfast

Phone No: 823 0260

Address: 204 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$45-85++

TAN BINH & PHU NHUAN DISTRICT

**Novotel Hotel**: is certainly one of the nicest hotel near the airport. Nonguests can use the hotel pool for US$8

Phone No: 842 1111

Address: 309 Nguyen Van Troi, District Tan Binh, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: rooms US$64-110++

**Omni Hotel**: provides the poshest acommodation in the area. This place has everything from room safes to a florist to a health club

Phone No” 844 9222

Addess: 251 Nguyen Van Troi, District Phu Nhuan, Ho Chi Minh City

Price: US$63-185++

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**PUBS & BARS**

**AQ Café**: is housed in a 100 years old wooden house across the street from Hoa Vien. This dimly-lit, indoor-outdoor café features a spacious garden and cool jazz music

Phone No: 829 8344

Address: 39 Mac Dinh Chi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 7am-mid-night

**No 5 Ly Tu Trong**: is a stylish place that’s run by a long-term Swiss expat named Heinz. The décor of this restored French-colonical villa is stylish and sleek. Good music, tasty food and beer, pool and friendly staff all contribute to the pleasant atmosphere

Phone No: 825 6300

Address: 5 Ly Tu Trong, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Underground**: located in the basement of the Lucky Plaza building, is another popular gathering spot expats and travellers alike. This spacious London tube-theme bar has a good happy hour and excellent pizza

Phone No: 829 9079

Address: 69 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 10am-midnight daily

**Sheridan’s Irish House**: is a traditional Irish pub beamed straight from the backstreets of Dublin

Phone No: 823 0973

Address: 17/13 Le Thanh Ton, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 11am-late daily

**Hard Rock Café**: the legendary imitation Hard Rock Café has been around for years. The real Hard Rock had plans to open in town a few years back, but perhaps these guys scared ‘em off? You’re not likely tospot any music celebrities here, but if you’re looking for a Hard Rock Café – Saigon’ T-shirt, this is the place to get it

Address: 24 Mac Thi Buoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Chu**: near the Notre Dame Cathedral, may be the only bar in the world advertising ‘wine, noodles and cigars’. And that’s what they’ve got; respectable wine; an interesting twist on Vietnamese noodle soup, *pho bo* with sirloin; and a climate-controlled stock of Cuban cigars. There’s live music Monday to Saturday from 9pm

Phone No: 822 3907

Address: 158 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Blue Gecko Bar**: is a mojor Aussie hang-out with the coldest beer in town. The music is good – if you like Australian music – and you can shoot pool or watch sport on the half-dozen or so TVs

Phone No: 824 3483

Address: 31 Ly Tu Trong, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 5pm-late

**Wild West Saloon**: is done up in a full-blown cowboy motif

Phone No: 829 5127

Address: 33 Hai Ba Trung, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Tex-Mex Cantina**: notable for its pool table, also features Mexican food with a Texan twist

Phone No: 829 5950

Address: 24 Le Thanh Ton, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Q Bar**: attracts a far more sophisticated clientele for drinks. This is where HCMC’s fashion-conscious, alter-native crowd hangs out. The stylish décor is cool and minimalist, and the music is hip. Q Bar is on the side of the Municipal Theatre, directly across from the Caravelle Hotel

Phone No: 823 3479

Address: 7 Lam Son Square, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 6pm-midnight

**Temple Club**: is another chic spot with brick walls and a Chinese atmosphere. There is a comfy lounge area in the back and a reataurant in the front. Like a décor? You can take some of it home with you – all of the furniture here is for sale

Phone No: 829 9244

Address: 29 Ton That Thiep, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Allez Boo Bar**: on the corner of De Tham, is a dimly lit, bamboo-decorated place that’s always packed with backpack-ers and always blaring music

Phone No: 837 2505

Address: 187 Pham Ngu Lao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 7pm-late

**Sahara Music Café**: is more pool-bar than restaurant, but it also serves good Western food (soups, salads, burgers and sandwiches). It is definitely one of the more stylish places in the neighbourhood

Phone No: 837 8084

Address: 277 Pham Ngu Lao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 9am-late

**Long Phi Bar**: is one of the longest-running in Pham Ngu Lao’s dark and decadent pub scene

Phone No: 836 9319

Address: 163 Pham Ngu Lao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 11am-6am

**NIGHT CLUBS**

**Apocalypse Now**: is one exception to the rule. It’s been around forever and leads the pack for those seeking a naughtier edge. The music is loud, and the patrons are from all walks of life and apocalyptically rowdy

Phone No: 824 1463

Address: 2C Thi Sach, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Shar**k: is one of the hottest dance spots in the city centre, and well-located near the river – the cover charge entitles you to one free drink

Phone No: 825 7783

Address: 5015 Ho Huan Nghiep, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Maya**: is the place for Latin dancing. And salsa lessons are held. It can also be recommended for serving respectable South American food and tapas, and the décor is chic

Phone No: 829 5180

Address: 6 Cao Ba Quat, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 5pm-late

**Sam Son**: is a routine Vietnamese disco five nights a week, but on Tuesday and Friday nights it has long been a gathering place for HCMC’s gay men

Phone No: 829 1219

Address: 28A Le Loi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**CINEMAS**

**Diamond Cinema**: there are plenty of cinemas in the centre, the problem for foreigners is that very few films are shown in languages other than Vietnamese. One notable exception is the Diamond Cinema

Address: 163 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Idecaf**: is the French cultural centre, where French films are screened

Phone No: 822 4577

Address: 31 Thai Van Lung, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: Tuesday at 8pm

Price: under US$1

**WATER PUPPETS**

**War Remnants Museum**

Phone No: 8290325

Address: 28 Vo Van Tan

**History Museum**

Phone No: 829 8146

**MUNICIPAL THEATRE**

**Nha hat Thanh Pho**: is between the Continental and Caravelle Hotels. Each week it offers a different programme, which may be Eastern European-style gymnastics, classical music or traditional Vietnamese theatre. There is typicall some kind of performance at 8pm; inquire at the theatre, or ask at your hotel

Phone No: 829 9976

Address: 7 Lam Son Square, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC**

**Nhac vien thanh pho**: near Reunification Palace. Students aged 7 to 16 attend the conservatory, which performs all the function of a public school in addition to providing instruction in music. The music teachers here were trained in France, Britain and the USA, as well as the former Eastern Bloc. The school is free, but most of the students come from well-off families, who can afford to purchase the prerequisite musical instruments

Phone No: 824 3774

Address: 112 Nguyen Du, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Performances at 7.30pm Mon-Fri Mar-May & Oct-Dec

**SAIGON RACE TRACK**

**Cau lac bo the thao Phu To**: dating from around 1900, reopened in 1989. Like the state lottery, the race track is extremely lucrative. But grumbling about just where the money is going has been coupled with widespread allegations about the drugging of horses. The minimum legal age for jockeys is 14 years; most look like they are about 10

Phone No: 855 1205

Address: 2 Le Dai Hanh, District 11, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 12.30pm-4.30pm Sat & Sun

**SHOPPING**

**ARTS & CRAFTS**

**Nguyen Freres**: is a sprawling antique shop across from the Sofitel Plaza Saigon. It specialises in furniture, and silk

Phone No: 822 9654

Address: 2A Le Duan, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Time open: 9am-7pm

**Oriental Home**: is in the same building and sells furniture, statues, ceramics, lamps and lanterns, and stone carvings

Phone No: 910 0194

Web: [www.madeinvietnamcollection.com](http://www.madeinvietnamcollection.com)

Address: 2A Le Duan, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

open time: 9am-7.30pm

**Indochine House**: smack dab in the city centre, is worth checking out for both antiques and reproduction furniture

Address: 29 Dong Du, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Authentique Interiors**: this is an interesting place to look for locally made home furnishings

Address: 6 Dong Khoi, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**GALLERIES**

**Blue Space Gallery**

Phone No: 821 3695

Address: 1A Le Thi Hong Gam, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 9am-6pm, daily

**Vinh Loi gallery**

Phone No: 930 5006

Address: 41 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City

Open time: 9am-6pm

**MARKET**

**Ben Thanh Market**: HCMC has a number of huge indoor markets sellings all manner of goods. There are some of the best places to pick up conical hats and *Ao Dai*. The most central of these is the recently renovated Ben Thanh Market. The market and surrounding streets make up one of the city’s livelist areas. Everything that’s commonly eaten, worn or used by the Saigonese is available here: vegetables, fruits, meat, spices, biscuits, sweets, tobacco, clothing, hats, household items, hardware and so forth. The legendary slogan of US country stores applies equally well here: ‘If we don’t have it, you don’t need it’

Address: corner Le Loi st, Ham Nghi st, Tran Hung Dao & Le Lai st, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**The Old Market**: despite the name, this is not the place to find antiques. Nor is it the place to look for electronics or machinery (go to Dan Sinh Market for these). Rather, the Old Market is where you can most easily buy imported (or back-market) food, wine, shaving cream, shampoo etc. However, if its Vietnamese name, Cho Cu, is written or pronounced without the correct tones it means ‘penis’; your cyclo driver will no doubt be much amused if you say that this is what you’re looking for

Address: on the north side of Ham Nghi between Ton That Dam and Ho Tung Mau, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Dan Sinh Market**: also known as the War Surplus Market, this is the place to shop for a chic pair of combat boots or rusty dogs tags. It’s also the best market for electronics and other types of imported machinery – you could easily renovate a whole villa from the goods on sale

The market is next to Phung Son Tu Pagoda. The front part is filled with stalls selling automobiles and motobikes, but directly behind the pagoda building you can find reproduction of what seems to be secondhand military gear

Stall after stall sell everything from handy gas masks and field stretchers to rain gear and mosquito nets. You can also find canteens duffel bags, ponchos and boots. Anyone planning on spending time in Rwanda or New York city should consider picking up a second-hand flak jacket (prices are good)

Address: 104 Yersin, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

**Binh Tay Market**: Cholon’s main market is Binh Tay market, an architectural masterpiece that’s Chinese in style, with a great clock tower in the centre. Much of the business here is wholesale. Binh Tay Market is about 1km southwest of Chau Van Liem street, although on the Cholon map it’s technically about one block outside of Cholon in District 6

Address: 57A Thap Muoi, District 6, Ho Chi Minh City

**Andong Market**: Cholon’s other indoor market, Andong is very close to the intersection of Tran Phu street and An Duong Vuong street. This market is four storeys high and is packed with shops. The 1st floor has heaps of clothing, including imported designer jeans from Hong Kong, the latest pumps from Paris and *Ao dai*. The basement is a gourmet’s delight of small restaurants – a perfect place to pig out ‘on a shoestring’

Address: Ward 9, District 5, Ho Chi Minh City