



[24 HOURS IN]

ho chi minh city

In the city of three million motorbikes, Sarah Lewis takes a wild ride past markets, bars and cultural sites, with plenty of stops to eat.

9am

PHO PIT STOP

Do as the locals do and start your day with a bowl of pho (pronounced 'fur'). Pull up a stool at a street stall, or head to Pho 24, a Vietnamese chain offering this noodle soup loaded with beef fillet and herbs, minus the traffic noise. **5 Nguyen Thiep St, District 1, +84 8 3914 2424, and other locations.**

10am

SOUVENIR SHOPPING

Squeeze your way through the maze of stallholders at Ben Thanh Market and discover everything from 'genuine

imitation' handbags to freshly roasted coffee beans and locally made silk scarves and lacquerware. **Cnr Le Loi, Ham Nghi, Tran Hung Dao and Le Lai Aves, District 1.**

11.30am

HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Chinese, French and North Vietnamese have all left their mark on this city. Sights include the 60s-era Reunification Palace (**106 Nguyen Du St, District 1**), History Museum (**2 Nguyen Binh Khiem, District 1**), Emperor Jade Pagoda (**73 Mai Thi Luu St, District 3**) and Notre Dame cathedral (**cnr Dong Khoi and Nguyen Du Sts, District 1**).

1.30pm

CHEAP AND CHEERFUL LUNCH

Hidden down an alleyway in District 3, open-air gem Banh Xeo 46A turns out some of the best banh xeo in town. The crispy, turmeric-laced pancakes, filled with prawns and pork come with a mountain of herbs. Order lemon sodas and spring rolls for a fabulous repast. **46a Dinh Cong Trang, +84 8 3824 1110.**

3.30pm

ESCAPE THE HEAT

The city's frantic pace and tropical temperatures mean you'll need a breather, so take your pick of retail or massage therapy. Lose yourself in the iconic four-level designer boutique Gaya (**1 Nguyen Van Trang St, District 1, +84 8 3925 1495**). Or opt for a treatment at Asiana Saigon's supremely smart day spa (see below).

7pm

DINNER A DEUX

For Vietnamese flavours with a modern twist, nab a table at Ho Chi Minh City hotspot Xu. Here, Australian-born chef Bien Nguyen turns out snappy dishes such as lime-cured scotch fillet beef and pandan panna cotta for dessert. **75 Hai Ba Trung St, District 1, +84 8 3824 8468.**

10pm

SAY CHEERS TO SAIGON

Swap the contemporary setting of Xu for the old-school ambience of the Saigon Saigon Bar in the Caravelle Hotel. From the roof terrace you'll have a great view of vibrant Lam Son Square below. **19 Lam Son Square, District 1, +84 8 3823 4999.**

11.30pm

REST YOUR HEAD

From here, it's a short stroll to the Asiana Saigon InterContinental, which offers the perfect blend of exotic details (orchids and silk throws) and luxurious touches (a pillow menu and bath master). Before lights out, head to the Purple Jade bar for a nightcap. **Cnr Hai Ba Trung St and Le Duan Blvd, District 1, +84 8 3520 9999.**