

The Bloggers Abroad



A growing band of expats are taking to blogging to share the ins and outs of life in Vietnam. From budding comedians to corporate refugees, **Liz Ledden** spotlights some of the writers in Vietnam's English-language blogosphere.

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Ottsworld

Travel and life experiences of a corporate American runaway
www.ottsworld.com

The Blogger
Sherry Ott, 39,
American



The Comical Hat

Random Hilarity
www.thecomicalhat.wordpress.com

The Blogger
Teddy de Burca Jnr., 33,
Irish

What do you enjoy most about living in Vietnam?

Observing the culture on the streets and on motorbikes. I think that Vietnam has been able to really hold on to their culture in light of all of the other economic advances. Of course the cheap beer and great food are also a plus!

How did your blog get started?

I started blogging in July 2006 as I was preparing to quit my corporate IT job and travel around the world for a year. It began as a way to simply stay in touch with family and friends and share some photography. As I travelled around the world the blog's purpose changed. Many of its followers wanted to know how I escaped from corporate America, as they wanted to do the same.

What is your blog's purpose?

My purpose now is to share a different, cultural, non-news perspective on the world and hopefully get people to see that it's not all bad. I suppose it's mainly geared towards Americans, since that's my home, but I actually have followers from all over the world!

What do you aim to achieve by blogging?

I disseminate a great deal of information for people looking to travel to various countries, and use it as a writing and photography portfolio. I also use it to promote my other website www.briefcasetobackpack.com, a site that inspires other Americans to take a career break and travel.

Recommended blog reads?

Gas-tron-o-my (www.gastronomyblog.com), Backpacking Teacher (www.backpackingteacher.wordpress.com), Living in Saigon (www.livinginsaignonvietnam.blogspot.com).

How did your blog get started?

Originally, I first started up a Blogger account called *Pittstop Works* back in 2002 where I posted published and non-published articles and stories I'd be writing in Vietnam so my parents could read them online. My various alter egos then fell out due to artistic differences, but thankfully everyone soon buried the hatchet and so "we" started up *The Comical Hat* sometime last year. If I'd spent as much time studying martial arts or learning Vietnamese as I have blogging, by now I could be a translator or a kung fu black belt. It's not much of an exaggeration to say blogging destroyed my life.

What is your blog's purpose?

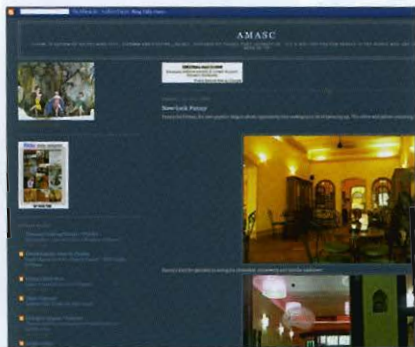
The blog's purpose is solely to amuse people. I post links to some of the sillier or more bizarre stories from Vietnam which I find around the interweb and I'll often add my own thoughts on the matter. From time to time I'll write something myself. My audience is made up by Vietnamese expats, departed expats, accidental readers who were googling "conical hat" and made a spelling mistake, and, oddly enough, Gene Wilder fans.

Thoughts on blogging in Vietnam?

To be honest I'm not a zealous pro-blogger and I know next to nothing about the blogosphere. In fact I actually think people should spend more time reading literature, writing poetry, learning to tap dance or getting some sunshine in the offline world. But if you're stuck in the office and trying to avoid work, then, please by all means click on *The Comical Hat*.

What do you enjoy most about blogging?

Probably the heady, hedonistic pool parties people keep inviting me to — *The Comical Hat* is soooo hot right now.



AMASC

Photos of everyday things and Vietnam's quirks, views on life in Vietnam
www.amasc.blogspot.com

The Blogger

Anne Murray, 40-something, Scottish

Blog background?

I started my blog two years ago, before I moved out here with my husband. It started as, and remains, simply an online scrapbook. I photograph things that catch my eye, that look different, that puzzle, please or amuse me then I put them on the blog to see if they do the same for others.

What is your blog's purpose?

I post what I was looking for when I used blogs to research Vietnam before moving here, pictures of everyday things, minutiae and quirks, one person's view of their world. It's not a globally popular superblog but even so, between 20 and 30 people a day drop by to browse what I post.

Thoughts on blogging in Vietnam?

Blogging, like Facebook, changed the way I find out about things and people. Blogs are not comprehensive, they're not always accurate and they vary as much as the people who produce them — that's what makes them interesting.

Best bit about blogging?

It keeps me alert to the amazing place where I live.

Recommended blog reads?

I'm drawn to the daily detail of Living in Saigon (www.livinginsaiگونvietnam.blogspot.com), particularly the abscess chronicles. Street Kids in Vietnam (www.vietnamstreets.blogspot.com) reminds me that there's a lot to be done in the area of child welfare.

Antidote to Burnout

Architecture and construction in Vietnam, with a sideline on everyday life
www.layered.typepad.com/antidote_to_burnout

The Blogger

Mel Schenck, 62, American



How did your blog get started?

I began my blog in September 2005 to chronicle my new adventure in Vietnam. I had just left my 24-year job in San Francisco, burned to a crisp, and I was looking forward to finding the antidote to this burnout in Vietnam. And I did.

What is your blog's purpose?

My original purpose was to keep in contact with my family and friends back in the USA and to explain to them why I would leave them behind and head off to the other side of the world. Once I got past my "this is Vietnam" period, my blog evolved to more of an exposition of the wonderful original modernist architecture that I find here in southern Vietnam.

What do you aim to achieve by blogging?

What I hope to achieve now with my blog is to show the world the innate design sense shared by southern Vietnamese and the many examples of modernist architecture Vietnamese architects have designed. A sideline is the exposition of the unique cafe society and large cafes in HCM City.

Recommended blog reads?

What I appreciate most is excellent writing and thinking. Hanoi Scratchpad (www.hanoiscratchpad.blogspot.com) is my favourite at this time.

Saigon Nezumi

Rantings of a Japanese Amerasian, former U.S. Marine and Peace Corps volunteer, entrepreneur and techie
www.saigonnezumi.com

The Blogger

Kevin Miller, Jr., 37, American



What do you enjoy most about living in Vietnam?

It is definitely the Vietnamese people. They are some of the friendliest people I have met around the world. I have learned a lot about myself, specifically my Asian half, by interacting with my Vietnamese friends.

How did your blog get started?

I started blogging with LiveJournal back in February, 2004, about three months before moving to Vietnam. In March, 2006, I decided to start saigonnezumi.com to blog about my experiences in Vietnam.

What is your blog's purpose?

I would say that the main purpose of my blog is to give readers a positive perspective on Vietnam, its people and culture. The majority of my audience are Viet Kieu or Westerners thinking about returning to Vietnam or currently living here now. I also have a large following of readers who visit my blog when I post articles about IT, in particular Linux and open source technology.

Recommended blog reads?

Charvey in Vietnam (www.chrisfarvey.typepad.com), an interesting blog by expat Chris Harvey, the general director for VietnamWorks.