



February 2024 Newsletter

Welcome Back: First Citizen Diplomacy Trip of 2024

We're pleased to welcome home our PeaceTrees Citizen Diplomats from their multi-week trip to Vietnam in January!

The itinerary encompassed a diverse array of experiences across Vietnam, including visits to historical sites such as the Hanoi Citadel, Phong Nha Cave, and Reunification Palace, and cultural stops at the Temple of Literature, Museum of Ethnology, and Saigon Opera House.

Travelers enjoyed local cuisine at various restaurants and engaged in community events like tree planting and attending the Prin Thanh Kindergarten dedication in Hương Hóa, where they joined in the "Mua Sap" bamboo dance alongside teachers and parents (check out the video above!).

Other highlights of the trip included the Ben Hai River and Vinh Moc tunnels in Dong Ha, and eco tours and cooking classes in Hoi An. The trip culminated in Ho Chi Minh City with visits to must-see sites like Saigon Central Post Office. Throughout their journeys, travelers experienced the rich history, culture, and hospitality of Vietnam and we're glad to welcome them home.

If you're interested in traveling with PeaceTrees, please email us at info@peacetreesvietnam.org or learn more at our [website](#).



A Citizen Diplomat reads to students at Prin Thanh Kindergarten in QuảngTrị Province



Citizen Diplomats visiting the Hue City Citadel, a historic royal palace set within the walled forbidden city

A bamboo planting activity shared between Citizen Diplomats & PeaceTrees demining staff in Mò Ó commune, Quảng Trị province



Citizen Diplomats touring Tuan Andrew Nguyen's artist studio in Ho Chi Minh City

Updates from Vietnam

Assessing Mine Risk Education in Quảng Bình

In January, PeaceTrees Vietnam's project in Quảng Bình collaborated with several schools to administer Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) surveys. These surveys, conducted before and after Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) activities, gauge changes in awareness among students regarding safety measures to prevent explosive ordnance accidents.

Over 800 students participated in the surveys and the survey results demonstrated good retention of safety knowledge. Ngô Quỳnh Hương, a student, emphasized the importance of not touching suspicious objects and promptly reporting them. Students also received hats from PeaceTrees Vietnam, featuring a hotline number for reporting, which was well-received by the schools and speaks to the program's effectiveness and community support.



A PeaceTrees educator speaks with a student at an EORE event in Quảng Bình province



Students attend an EORE event in Quảng Bình province

Clearing Mr. Hồ Văn Phai's Family Land

On February 20th, during clearance operations in Hường Hóa district, PeaceTrees Vietnam's clearance team uncovered a large MK 81 bomb among cassava crops on Mr. Hồ Văn Phai's family land. The team swiftly blocked off the area, posted warning signs, and informed local authorities and nearby families to prevent access to the hazardous site.

The bomb, weighing 250 pounds with 96 pounds of explosive load, posed a severe risk to the local community but PeaceTrees' clearance technicians removed it safely with meticulous planning and execution. Thanks to the proactive and careful intervention of the clearance team the community is safer, and Mr. Hồ Văn Phai's family and neighbors feel a restored sense of safety and security.



PeaceTrees Vietnam's technicians assess a bomb found in Hường Hóa district



A PeaceTrees deminer shaking hands with Mr. Hồ Văn Phai after removing a large explosive from his land

PeaceTrees Wishes You a Happy Lunar New Year



Happy Lunar New Year! Chúc Mừng Năm Mới!

PeaceTrees is delighted to wish you all a Happy Lunar New Year! The Lunar New Year holds even greater significance this year the United Nations has officially recognized it as a holiday thanks to significant contributions by Vietnam and 11 other nations. In this spirit of celebration and hope, we extend our warmest wishes for a year filled with joy, prosperity, and peace to you and your family.

Tết Traditions in Vietnam

Tết in Vietnam is a cherished tradition where homes are cleaned and adorned for the Ong Cong - Ong Tao ceremony, followed by ancestral grave visits and the preparation of a special "year-end" tray. Glutinous rice cakes and a tray of five fruits convey well-wishes, while the custom of "xông đất" influences the homeowner's upcoming year. Adults give "lucky money" to children and the elderly, and visits to pagodas for good fortune are common, along with symbolic purchases like salt. Learn more about these unique traditions [here!](#)

What We're...

Rooting For: [Puppy Trainers Wanted for Veteran Service Dogs](#)

America's VetDogs, which aids veterans and service members with disabilities, is seeking part-time puppy trainers to socialize dogs in weekend positions across Maryland, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maine, and Pennsylvania. Volunteers commit to welcoming a dog for 12 to 16 months and exposing them to various environments. The puppies spend weekdays in correctional facilities as part of the Prison Puppy Program. Since 2003, America's VetDogs has provided over 1,000 service dogs to veterans and service members. To learn more about volunteering, visit the [VetDogs website](#).



Reading: [A Diary's Homecoming Story](#)

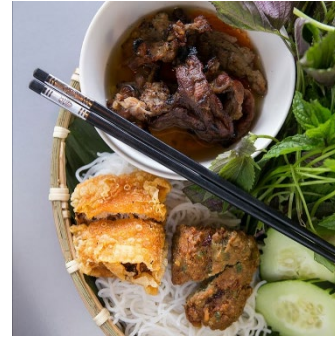
In 1967, U.S. Marine Corps forces recovered a diary written by a Vietnamese soldier in Thừa Thiên Huế province. Now, over 50 years later, the diary is once again in the hands of its owner, Mr. Vũ Đắc Túc. Mr. Vũ Đắc Túc received his diary alongside his family at his home on the eve of the Tết holiday. Read more about this fascinating story of history and homecoming [here](#).



Eating: [North Vietnamese Cuisine at Wicked Chopstix](#)

6021 Martin Luther King Jr Way S, Seattle

Wicked Chopstix, owned by Michael Nguyen and managed by his sister Ida, offers a contemporary dining experience with nods to traditional Vietnamese cuisine. The restaurant features dishes celebrating the coastal city of Hai Phong, with specialties like cha cã la vong. Their compact menu includes diverse pho options, while monthly specials like bò né often become permanent fixtures. Don't miss their standout dish, mì quang (a colorful noodle dish), which boasts a medley of textures and flavors.



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