

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Phong and his parents took Heng to the airport early in the morning, and Heng flew back to Arizona. When Phong came back, he, Ha, Andy and us bought tickets to Sapa for \$90/person from the hotel. We would leave for Sapa tomorrow. As for today, we had nothing planned, so Ha called up everyone and we, Ha, Phong, Andy, Helen, John, Phuong went for lunch at a Thai restaurant at 1 PM. On the way to the restaurant we stopped by a street vendor and John bought us five different types of sweet potatoes. Five minutes later we arrived at the Thai restaurant. Newton told everybody that he would like to treat everybody so Andy ordered a lot of food. The food was very good. Newton paid 1,000,000 VND.

Figure 1: Lunch at a Thai restaurant



Helen was flying back to China tomorrow so we spent today shopping. We went to Hang Gai and Hang Bong streets where there are many shops selling stuff for tourists. We stopped at one big store and Newton bought a boat made out of seashells for \$7.00. Ha had to do some errands so she left. John, Phuong, Phong, Helen and us walked

around this part of the city for three hours. We stopped at the Papa Joes coffee shop for a break when we got tired. Casy ordered mocha coffee and Newton ordered Vietnamese coffee.

Figure 2: Relaxing at Papa Joes coffee shop



After two hours sat at the coffee shop, Ha called. We meet her outside the coffee shop and together we walked around to do more shopping. John took Newton to the local Lego store. This store was on a street full of shops selling toys. Most of the toys were illegal copies of Western brand name toys, such as fake Legos made in China. We then walked to some music stores. Ha, Phong, Tron and Newton stopped in on one store and looked for CD's and DVD's. The store sold local, as in Vietnamese music CD's and movie DVD's. But its primary products were DVD's of Western movies and CD's of Western artists. We were not sure if these were pirated copies or authentic products, as nearly all the CD's and DVD's came in the same packaging as that found in American stores. Newton spent 230,000 VND for six classical CDs from one shop. Casy, Andy, Helen and Phuong went to a souvenir store across the street. Casy bought four picture albums with covers that have designs of Vietnamese traditional dress for \$13. She also bought three wall decorations made from eggshells for 160,000 VND. We walked to the night market. John and Phuong told us this is where produce comes in from the farms during the night. Restaurants buy stuff here for use the next day. Tron bought us some fried corn and plantain. At 7 PM Tron took us to a good Vietnamese restaurant for dinner. Some of the dishes Tron ordered were goat's breasts and frogs legs. Nobody knew what the dishes were until he told us after we finished our dinner. Newton said the taste was okay. Tron wanted to pay the dinner but Andy said it was his turn. We finished dinner at 9 PM. Tron suggested we see a movie at Vincom Mall. We all agreed except Helen because she needed to pack.

Figure 3: Scenes from the night market of Hanoi



Figure 4: Dinner at a nice restaurant; goat breasts were on the menu and shown at right below.



We took a taxi from the restaurant to Vincom mall (23,000 VND) and took an elevator to the movie theater on the top floor. The movies being shown were a mix of old and new American movies, and new Vietnamese movies. Tron bought movie tickets for 50,000 VND/person and sweet popcorn and bottled water for everybody. He picked a Japanese movie called Tokyo Sinking. He did not know that the movie was in Japanese with Vietnamese subtitles. During the movie, Phoung tried to explain to Casy what the movie was about. Newton was bored and we were not sure about Andy. He seemed to have enjoyed the movie even though he did not understand it. The theater was similar to those in America; a flat rate for all seats in the theater and several screens in the complex. The movie ended at 11 PM and we took a taxi to a street with a lot of Pho restaurants. Casy got a fever and the flu so Newton and Casy did not eat with them, and instead walked back to the hotel. Before we left, we said goodbye to Helen since we were not planning to go with her to the airport the next day.

Figure 5: Night at the movie theater

