

Ben Tre

The island province of Ben Tre is full stereotypical delta scenery. The land is crisscrossed by a labyrinth of small palmed lined canals. It's easy to imagine a PT boat cruising around the corner although these days it's often a picturesque small fishing canoe or a boat filled with coconuts bound for destinations further a field. It is a rural province and as is true in most places, as the towns get smaller the people get friendlier. Walking around in the countryside just outside of town I seemed to be constantly invited for a drink and food; often frog which seems to be a very popular dish. As I struggled to nibble the meat of the bones, I noticed the locals would just pop the whole thing in there mouth and chomp down bones and all. I kept being implored to eat even when I thought there was no meat left. So "I bit the bone" in this case and popped the whole thing in. It reminded me of eating chicken feet in China, not so pleasant, I prefer just the meat. The small parts of the legs weren't a problem but it was a little tougher to through down the half split open torso with the organs reveled like it had just been a dissected by a 6th grade science student. Not wanting to insult my hosts, I closed my eyes and swallowed. It didn't take me long to get a tutorial in drinking rice alcohol in Vietnam. Apparently here the custom is for one person to drink half the shot and then pass it to the next. As rice alcohols go, and I'm starting to consider myself an expert on the subject, it wasn't that bad, better than most, mainly because it wasn't that strong. I somehow spent 2 days in Ben Tre without really doing that much. Most of the time I was waiting for the weather to get better but fortunately there was always a few friendly



Boat in a canal, Ben Tre



A frog leg I ate.

locals hanging around to pass the time, and with the language difficulties an ordinary five second conversation gets dragged out for five minutes until both parties understand what the other is trying to convey. On the afternoon of my last day in Ben Tre the weather cleared enough to make hiring a boat around the canals worthwhile. Although finding a boat was not nearly as easy as it had been in other towns, where I would just walk down near the water wait for the offers to come in. I finally found a boat with



the help of an ex-pat Swedish guy who happen to be riding past when I was inquiring with some local moto drivers. Indecently, he was also the only other white person I saw while in Ben Tre.

Having a beer and some food with the locals, Ben Tre



My boat driver and his daughter, Ben Tre



Pouring rice alcohol, Ben Tre



Coconut the main export of Ben Tre



Boy with a dog, Ben Tre



Bricks in a basket, Ben Tre



The monsoon is coming, rain clouds move in as the evening approaches, Ben Tre



Street scenes, Ben Tre



Bailing water out of the boat in one of the canals, Ben Tre



Broom against a house wall with a boy peering out the window, Ben Tre