

Hitting the coast

From Saigon I headed to the coast for my first look at the ocean since I landed in Hong Kong more than three and a half months ago. My first stop was Mui Ne beach. In addition to the beach, there are some large sand dunes, and a fishing village near by. Of the three, I found the latter most interesting. I'm really not much of a beach person; I need to be doing something. As beaches go it wasn't that great lots of resorts, many of which seemed to be completely empty, not much surf, no coral for snorkeling, especially when compared to beaches in Thailand, Goa, or even the one I went to in Burma. Fortunately I had a great time in the fishing village. As I walked along the beach near the fishing village, on the first evening I was there, it didn't take long before I was invited up on one of the beached fishing boats and treated to dinner and the requisite rice wine. Being invited for dinner on a fishing boat, I was of course expecting fish, instead it was sweat and sour pork skin, very chewy pork skin.

Nevertheless, I put it down, and tried as best I could to pick around the rubber like pork. They were preparing to go out fishing for the evening. I internally debated for an instant about whether I wanted to see if I could accompany them fishing. But I decided it probably wouldn't be that comfortable or interesting once the novelty wore off to spend all night on a fishing boat. Not to mention possible safety concerns about the sea worthiness of the vessel. I'm guessing by the look of the boats they did not carry all the requisite safety equipment, like life vests, you would find on a boat in the west. I opted instead for my beach front hotel room and woke up early to watch the night's catch be brought in and sorted on the beach.



Eating dinner on the fishing boat, Mui Ne beach.



Cooking dinner on the fishing boat, Mui Ne beach.

Continuing north, I stopped in Nha Trang which is Vietnam's premier dive location. My main purpose in stopping was to do a snorkeling trip. I'd like to try diving as some point but with a price difference of \$10 for snorkeling and \$42 to try diving I decided to leave diving for another time when I'm traveling on a higher budget. Of course what they didn't tell me was the \$10 for a one way ticket. Yes, that's right, I got left behind. I was following a large school of fish around and when I came up I noticed off in the distance that most of the people were back on my boat. I was a ways away so I started swimming back but when I got there my boat had already left. This is the point in the story where I could embellish if I so chose, and tell you how I had to swim 3 hours to the nearest island, lived on coconuts for 3 days, and eventually flagged down a fishing boat to get a ride back to the mainland. However the reality was much less dramatic. Fortunately, one of the other dive company's boats was still there and I climbed up on the one remaining boat and asked them where my boat went. They informed me of the obvious, that it had left. I had them call my boat and inform them they had left me behind. I got a ride half way back on their boat to the point where my boat had stopped to wait for me. The guys on the remaining boat were amused and amazed that they left me behind especially when I told them there were only 5 other clients on the boat. I would think they could count to 6. My captain was extremely apologetic; apparently it's a big no, no, in the dive business to leave someone behind, which is good. It worked out fine for me and I got a little extra snorkeling in. Who knows, maybe they will base the sequel to the movie "Open Water" on me, but I'll definitely need to work on my embellishing to get Hollywood interested. By the way the snorkeling was nice the visibility was about 10-15 m so it was pretty clear. There were not quite as many fish as when I went snorkeling in Thailand on a previous trip but I did see a moiré eel, no sharks though. Fittingly enough I had eel soup for dinner.



Kids playing soccer on the beach at sunset, Mui Ne beach.



Waiting for her husband to bring in the fish.



Selling the fish at the market, Mui Ne.



Women looking towards fishing boats in the harbor, Mui Ne.



Woman resting on the small circular boats used to reach the fishing boats anchored of shore



Women and children peer out of a door way



Sand dunes near Mui Ne.