

Markets on the Mekong

Can Tho is roughly smack dab in the center of the Mekong delta region its main interest to travelers are the floating markets that are within easy striking distance of the city. I took the standard boat trip to the nearest market on my first morning in Can Tho. Since the markets are at there busiest between 6 and 8 in the morning it means early rising. My second day in Can Tho I hired a motorbike driver to take me to a market further away. While many of the tour boats eventually go here since they are coming from Can Tho they arrive after the market as pretty much ended. I got there at 6:30 and hired a row boat to take me around the market. It was a really nice market and I didn't see another tourist until I was about to leave and the market had ended when the first of the tour boats arrived.

A quick aside about traveling in the delta: It's unlike other places because while there are a lot of tourists, they are almost all on package tours from Saigon. Even most of the "backpackers" who travel independently in other countries take the tours in Vietnam because they are so cheap, cheaper than you can do it on your own. So if you go any where in a city where the package tour doesn't go you really feel like you're off the beaten path, people are curious. You get smiles from the other customers when you sit down in the local restaurants. Of course the con side of it is the constant hassle of over charging which seems to be viewed by many Vietnamese as a civic duty. There are Communist looking propaganda posters everywhere and loud speakers that periodically blurt out mix of news and propaganda from the street corners, kind of like the town crier. I'm wondering if they all saying the same thing: "remember the great leader Ho Chi Min and don't forget to over charge the foreigners for there centuries of pillaging our country." It's not even about the money, although some times it's double or even as much as five times the actual price, but just the honesty, and going to elaborate lengths to try to deceive you. It's worst around bus stations where people try to get to buy and over priced ticket from the driver and they split the profit. No one else will ever step up to tell you the right price. Fortunately I have a pretty good idea now what things should cost. Of course getting on the bus in the first problem, getting off and to you're final destination is another. Twice now I've had buses drop me off 2 or 3 km further outside of town than they needed to. I don't know the town and don't know where I am so I don't have much choice. The moto drivers at the place where I get dropped off invariably try and ask for extortion like prices. Generally I just start walking when they ask the same amount for a trip into town as it cost me to hire a driver and moto for half a day. With street vendors it's hit or miss some times they are honest other times they ask a ridiculous price. I don't like having to be immediately skeptical people when they tell me a price but it happens. It's a pretty big contrast with Laos where the people are incredibly friendly helpful rarely over changing. In Laos, if a Lao person tried to steal from you on a bus I'm pretty sure other Lao people would stop him. In Vietnam, I don't get that sense. I think most Vietnamese would look the other way and figure he deserves it, so I'm definitely more alert when traveling in Vietnam. I don't mean to make it sound like sound like the Vietnamese are all evil criminals I have had a few nice conversations with people on the street who just wanted to practice their English. So far judging by the number of photos I'm taking Vietnam is a very photogenic place averaging about 150 pictures a day. Mostly because of boat trips, where that's mainly what you do sit in a boat and take pictures. Fortunately for you, below is only a small sample of those images



Cai Rang floating market near Can Tho.



Cai Rang floating market near Can Tho.



Phong Dien floating market near Can Tho.



Overview of Cai Rang floating market near Can Tho.



Pineapples, Cai Be floating market near Vinh Long.



Lettuce, Cai Rang floating market near Can Tho.



**Mangoes, Cai Rang
floating market near
Can Tho.**



Canal near Vinh Long.



Canal near Vinh Long.



Phong Dien floating market near Can Tho.



Cai Rai floating market near Can Tho.



Phong Dien floating market near Can Tho.



The markets on land aren't bad for photography subjects either, Can Tho market.



**Phong Dien
floating market,
near Can Tho.**



Fish vendors Sa Dec market



Woman smiling for the photo, Phong Dien floating market near Can Tho.