

Vietnam Photo Essay

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“Comment on gagne sa vie”

One of my favorite past times is people-watching and observing how the locals see us, as tourists. Captured in these photos is the varying degrees of familiarity each local has with foreigners. One woman cheekily smiled at the camera under her baggage of fruit, preparing to corner me for money for the photo. Others either ignored us as we passed by or simply and unapologetically stared, mumbling in Vietnamese to their neighbors. As I observed the locals, however, I couldn't help but wonder about their daily lives and how they make a living. These photos taken in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi portray the impoverished way of life in Vietnam. The type of work depicted in these photos are typical of Vietnam. From sitting in one place for long hours at the market selling fruit, meat or vegetables, to walking up and down streets, carrying items and food on their backs in search of gullible tourists. Even entire families, including children, were seen working together to get by, like the young girl setting up meals to be sold at the foot of a bridge. Informal jobs like these are common around the streets of both Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Street vendors often find themselves being shooed away by authorities or worrying about being caught by police. Because most things are cheap for us who are accustomed to the US dollar, it's easy to forget that on the other end of the deal are locals who attempt to get by in life with very little money. For well-paying jobs in America, \$25 dollars an hour is the norm. But for some street vendors in Vietnam, they're lucky if they make 25 USD a day. This is why I chose to document these locals, to show the strength and perseverance in spite of their realities.



Une femme qui vend des légumes sur un marché en plein air à Ho Chi Minh.



L'homme qui a conduit notre petit
bateau sur le delta du Mékong.



Des hommes qui polissent et reprisent les chaussures sur les rues à Hanoi pour peu d'argent.



Une femme qui se promène dans les rues à Ho Chi Minh en vendant des fruits, ciblant peut-être des touristes comme nous.



Pendant notre premier jour à Ho Chi Minh, nous avons passé une famille où la jeune fille préparait de la nourriture pour être vendue.