

I'm walking through the foyer of Hanoi La Siesta Hotel Trendy, about to leave for a morning tour, when every front-desk employee looks up at me, smiles, and sings out, one after the other, like a Vietnamese a capella group, "Have an enjoyable time!"

Later, in basement cocktail bar The Den — all moody timbers, supple leather and a wine list that tops out at Chateau Margaux for 13.5 million Vietnamese dong (\$770) — the barman serves up insider city tips and quizzes me about my Vietnam travels. It's more than small talk; he seems genuinely engaged. In fact, every staff member I come across convinces me I am their sole concern, which is quite a feat given the hotel has 68 rooms over 11 floors and three wings.

Vietnamese hotels are some of the friendliest I've encountered but at La Siesta Hotel Trendy in Hanoi the congeniality's off the charts. Even so it comes as a shock to read, in January of this year, that this elaborately tiled property, which opened in March 2016, was ranked 10th best hotel in the world in Tripadvisor website's annual Travellers' Choice Awards. The winner was an obscure Cambodian inn; No 4 was Trendy's sister property Hanoi La Siesta Hotel & Spa, which launched late last year.

The results are baffling but probably speak volumes about the astuteness of founder Do Van Dan's "guests come first" mantra.

In 2006 he pioneered the capital's boutique hotel craze with a 10-room Old Quarter inn renowned for making guests feel comfortable and cared for. Those same principles underpin all the group's properties, which now number five in Hanoi and one in Hoi An.

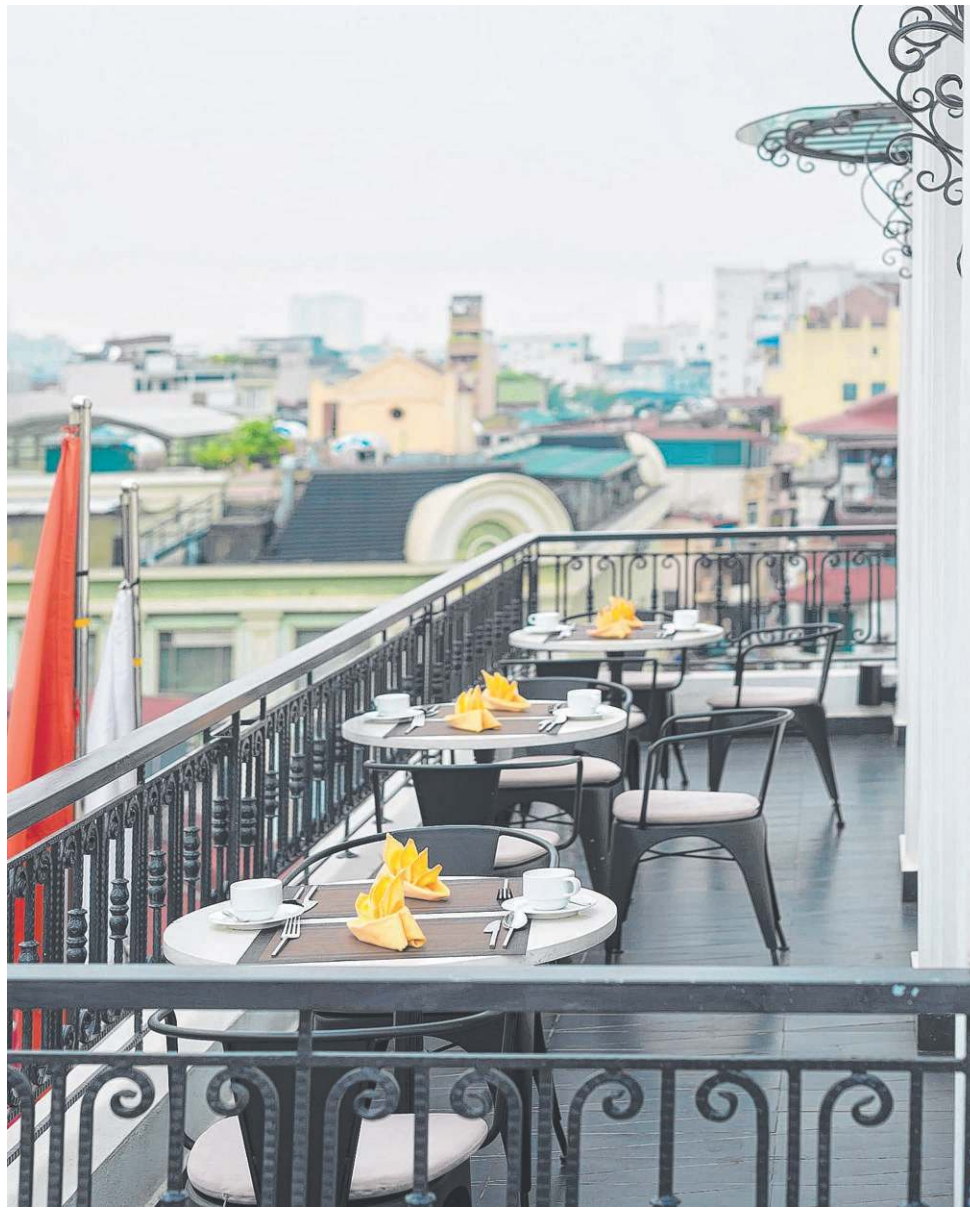
Trendy is also located in the Old Quarter, on a narrow dog-leg street named after the 19th-century revolutionary poet Nguyen Quang Bich. The neighbourhood brims with character and borders the French Quarter so guests are ideally located.

The historic Metropole Hotel and Opera House are 25 minutes' walk from the front door. St Joseph's Cathedral, sacred heart of the Old Quarter, is a seven-minute stroll, as is central Hoan Kiem Lake.

The hotel's name reflects an untraditional take on interiors, which lean heavily towards timber, slate, glass and custom-made retro-style furnishings. Guestrooms have quirky but charming features such as stylised wardrobes draped in leather that remind of old-time travelling trunks. The ideas aren't exactly original but you'd have to be a design snob not to appreciate the French tiling in bathrooms or the soft sunlight falling on polished wooden floors through sheer bronze curtains that veil Hanoi's Cuisenaire skyline.

Trendy Suites are spacious and appealing (and not terribly expensive at about \$170 a night) and would be my Goldilocks choice. So-called Trendy Deluxe and Cosy Deluxe rooms feel cramped and lack natural light but Premier La Siesta suites come with terraces, palms and sun lounges.

There is ample reason to linger in-house at Red Bean restaurant and its magical terrace, suspended eight storeys above Old Hanoi but



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- hanoilasiestatrendyhotel.com
- vietnamairlines.com

Red Bean restaurant terrace at Hanoi La Siesta Hotel Trendy; a Trendy Suite, left



## MORE TO THE STORY

Another property in Hanoi with welcoming staff is Apricot Hotel (pictured), mere steps from the Old Quarter and with views over Hoan Kiem Lake. Once known as Phu Gia, this storeyed establishment was famous for its parties in the 1920s and 30s and a popular bolthole for foreign correspondents in the 50s; eventually it fell into disrepair and was closed. In 2015 it remerged as Apricot Hotel following a top-to-toe revamp. Designers took their inspiration from the city's rich legacy of French colonial architecture and didn't stint on the neoclassical trimmings, decorating the sparkling lobby with marble floors, glittering chandeliers and gilded furnishings. They overlaid all this with an impressive collection of contemporary Vietnamese art displayed across public areas and the 123 guestrooms and suites. The art theme is continued at the in-house restaurants, L'Artiste, Palette and A'telier Lounge. Cocktails at the rooftop bar (with heated pool) afford spectacular lake views and recall a little of that after-five colonial glamour. There are five accommodation categories, including studios with kitchenettes and premium gallery suites, some with private gardens.

**CHRISTINE McCABE**  
■ apricot-hotels.com

feeling simultaneously removed from, and immersed in, the mayhem.

Red Bean's daytime menu runs to Vietnamese classics and popular western plates including Australian T-bones, but the main event here is breakfast; a cross-cultural slam of spaghetti carbonara, pho, eggs any way, and a sushi station. Staff speak flat white and make a decent one. There are also fresh juices (dragonfruit and aloe, for example), French toast, pikelets and even (be still my fi-brillating heart) chocolate bread-and-butter pudding.

Between that and the impromptu a capella greetings, you won't forget this place fast.

Kendall Hill was a guest of Hanoi La Siesta Hotel Trendy.

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