

3/21/2010

HO-CHI-MIN CITY, FORMERLY SAIGON

The ship navigated some 40 miles upriver from the China Sea, and we docked at the city of Saigon, Vietnam. Since the war, they changed the name of the city to Ho Chi Min City, but the people prefer the shorter, easier to say, name of Saigon.

This country is the 14th most populated in the world, and is growing. Saigon is the financial city of Vietnam. People here, earn more money than people in the country. The majority of the traffic here are motorbikes, the rest are buses, trucks and automobiles. Cars are very expensive because of government taxes. The tax on a Rolls Royce is around 1.3 million US dollars! This is on top of the expensive dealer pricing.

A busy city tour took us to a lacquer factory, a water puppet show, a large local shopping market, and an exciting rickshaw ride. They do not use rickshaws for transportation anymore because they are too slow and impede modern day traffic.

There were no traffic jams per se: but it was amazing to see four way traffic at an intersection, thread their way between and in front and behind each other as they drove across the streets!

We were instructed that when crossing a street, to use the crosswalks and walk slow and steady across in front of the oncoming traffic. Do not stop because you will confuse them and they cannot tell whether to go in front or behind you and they may hit you! Scary, but it works!

The tourist only rickshaw ride was the highlight of the tour. We rode thru narrow streets lined with vendors of all kinds. Streets where our buses would not fit. We also threaded our way across busy intersections with no stop signs and four way traffic all at the same time!



It was a tiring day and we all were glad to return to the ship again.

Dave