

# Ten10

The photographer and brains behind **Vietnam Photo Adventures**, **Arnaud Foucard** has been in Vietnam for 20 years and counting. Interview by **Thomas Barrett**

**How did you end up in Vietnam?**

The first time I came to Vietnam was through a job in tourism. It was during Tet back in 1994. We were one of the first tour operators in France sending clients to Vietnam. Photography only became my job in Vietnam three years ago, though. It has always been my passion, so I developed this into the photography tours that I now run all over Vietnam.

**What makes Vietnam such an attractive destination for photographers?**

I believe the people are just great. They're easy to shoot and happy when you take a photo of them. There are 54 ethnic minorities here so there are so many types of faces, which for a photographer is fantastic.

**In all the years in Vietnam what are some of the changes you've seen?**

I knew Vietnam in 1994; half of the vehicles were bicycles. The buildings have also changed, we've lost a lot of the colonial architecture — the physiognomy of Ho Chi Minh City [and Hanoi] is constantly changing.

**What are you still learning about photography?**

Everything. If you have decided you've learnt everything you'll never get better. I will learn until I take my last shot. Every day I am learning and getting better — you are dead if you never change.

**What advice would you give to a budding photographer?**

Look at different photographers — different art — and try to get inspiration. Try and see and be curious with everything. Don't stay the same. The world is different every day. Try to innovate and create.

**You spend much of your time on the streets of Cholon, how do you shoot street photography without annoying people?**

There are many ways —

it all depends on where you are in the world. In Vietnam we really can approach the people, it's quite unlike Paris or New York. It's much more personal here. We exchange a moment and share it. It's about charming the people. It's not just about taking the photo and going on your way. It's about understanding the situation and the people — getting to know them a little bit — trying to learn about their world.

**Have you taken any risks trying to get the perfect photo?**

I believe everyone has their limits or comfort zones — if you stay in it, you produce the same kind of photos. For example, in the rice fields, if you don't work in the rice fields, you will always have a distance, so you have to find a way to get close to the people who work there.

**How do you feel about the rise of the camera phone?**

I did a tour this morning with just that. A client wanted just to shoot on her iPhone. She emailed after saying all her friends were amazed at the quality of the photos that she got. I'm like everybody else, I take photos with the camera phone but running a photography workshop is something different!

**If you could be invisible for the day with your camera, where would you go?**

North Korea — when you go there you have an official tour guide, so I'd like to go without an escort. I'd love to see how it really is there.

**What motivates you to continue with photography?**

I like to be with people. It's not just about taking photos but it's sharing the experience with the people that I bring on my tours. I like to help people get a better understanding of photography. It's about helping people get to another level. It's my vocation.

*To find out more about Arnaud's photography tours, click on [vietnam-photoadventures.com](http://vietnam-photoadventures.com)*

