

## Saigon Ink, Tattoo in Vietnam

By: Diana van Oort

After our report [Got Ink? Yogyakarta Tattoo Guide](#) we present another story on tattoo life in South East Asia: **Saigon Ink**.



Vietnam is not a country that springs to mind when you're thinking about getting a tattoo. Tattoos had a bad rap: only criminals used to get them. But that's changing with local celebrities starting to flaunt their tattoos. Young people are getting more and more interested in body art. The designs are changing as well: from more classical images to more modern, a mixture of the old and the new. Typical Vietnamese ones are emerging.

Saigon Ink is a far cry from getting a tattoo in a clandestine plastic surgery 'clinic'. Clinic meaning two beds in a room tucked away in some dark alley run by a beauty shop. That was the case in 2007 when my friend got her tattoo. Another friend who was snooping around found breast implants with an English manual. He was immediately called back when they noticed. The girls doing the tattoo knew what they were doing; only the quality of the ink isn't up to standard, so it's already starting to fade.



Some friends had their tattoos done to celebrate the birth of their first child. It was done by Huy, 37, and has been in the tattoo business for some six years. He works in Saigon Ink and in another Saigon Ink shop on Dien Bien Phu. They are the first legal tattoo shops. He studied with Mr. Thien; one of Vietnams tattoo pioneers and now works on his own. He already knew a bit about art before he started working as a tattoo artist. He also went to study in Thailand. Huy loves making new designs to beautify the skin, as he tells me. His family has no problems either with his tattoos or with his job. His wife has a lot of tattoos as well. They have an eight year old girl and a five year old boy.

Saigon Ink is located on 26 Trần Hưng Đạo, just around the corner from De Tam. It's really busy downstairs with a lot of young Vietnamese girls, chatting and drinking their ice teas. I'm not sure if they're there to get a tattoo, or just enjoying the company... So if you want a good and reasonably cheap tattoo, Saigon Ink is the place to go!