

# RICE-ROOTS

## HIGHLIGHTS:

'Invite Mr Wright' featuring  
Shu Tan and Sapa  
O'Chau premiers on TLC

NEW Lonely Planet 2012  
praises Sapa O'Chau

Sapa O'Chau on Belgian  
TV channel KETNET

## Also in this issue:

Volunteer - Jenna's Story

Our Café is OPEN

Student Profile

Earth Hour 2012

Hmong Studies USA

Sapa O'Chau in HCMC

## Shu's welcome to the second Sapa O'Chau Newsletter !

Just three months since  
the first edition of 'Rice-  
Roots' and already so  
much news.

At long last a dream came  
true when we opened the  
doors to the [Sapa O'Chau  
Café](#). It was a very  
exciting time for us all,  
especially the students  
who will be able to use the  
Café to develop a wide  
range of hospitality skills.  
This experience will  
enable them to secure  
future jobs in the  
hospitality industry -  
helping themselves, their  
families and their  
community!

[Sapa O'Chau Trekking &  
Homestays](#) is now  
receiving booking  
enquiries daily thanks in

part to a "brilliant" review  
in the 2012 Lonely Planet  
guide. This social  
enterprise allows our  
trekking students to  
develop their guiding skills  
- providing employment  
opportunities in Sapa and  
beyond!

Next will be [Sapa O'Chau  
Handicrafts](#) which we  
hope to establish soon to  
provide the local ethnic  
minority women with  
professional training in  
order for them to produce  
high quality 'Fair-Trade'  
products that can be  
distributed on the world-  
wide market.

Oh! so much to do!!! But,  
so much fun!!

Of course none of this is

possible without the  
support of many people  
world-wide and the many  
volunteers who come to  
help. Some stay a day,  
some a week and some  
long term. It could not be  
done without YOU!

So to all our friends &  
family - both here with us  
in Sapa or somewhere out  
there - we thank you for  
your support and we are  
proud of the things your  
support has enabled us to  
achieve. I hope that you  
can come and visit us  
soon to see the many  
things we are doing. But if  
you can't, I hope you  
enjoy 'Rice-Roots' and  
that it brings you a bit  
closer to us. – Shu Tan



Want to help now ?...

Rate us on  
[TripAdvisor](#)

## Belgian children learn with Sapa O'Chau

Sapa O'Chau was visited  
by the Belgian children's  
TV show, [Karrewiet](#),  
shown on the Flemish  
channel [Ketnet](#). It  
provides cultural & news  
related programmes to  
children. The film crew  
came to Sapa O'Chau on  
Friday 30th March, filming  
the Centre and the  
students having their  
lessons in the classroom.

About ten students were

chosen to be interviewed.  
They were asked about  
their experiences of  
learning English and what  
"school" meant to them.  
Then the whole class  
sang 'Reach for the Stars'  
for the perfect take.

Volunteer teachers,  
Jenna, Jess and Tom  
were interviewed and  
gave their views about the  
importance of the work  
done at the Centre and

the barriers and difficulties  
that the project faces.

The film crew also visited  
Lao Chai village with Shu  
to learn about the  
production methods of  
traditional H'mong clothes  
from hemp and indigo.

The show will be aired 23-  
27 of April and is also  
available [online!](#)





Ghosts, Candles & Popcorn for an unforgettable Earth Hour 2012

## Earth Hour 2012 – 31st March

The international [Earth Hour](#) was observed appropriately in the dark at the Sapa O'Chau Centre, where volunteers and students huddled together around candles. All mobile phones and any other electrical equipment were turned off, of course!

The town of Sapa encounters power cuts every other day, but this community spirited 'black out' was intentional - to raise awareness of the planet's limited resources and encourage the turning off of

electrical equipment when not in use.

Our volunteers made up ghost stories in the dark, spooking the students and even some of the older, apparently more robust, teachers, one of whom needed her hand holding all the way home – not naming any names.

The students then shared their real-life experiences of spirit encounters with the group, who at this point had eyeballs sticking out on stalks and teeth

chattering. Volunteer teacher Jess Macnair said, "I learnt that the H'mong people frequently see spirits in their home or in the fields and if these spirits are not re-connected with that individual then it is believed that disease, depression and sometimes death can result."

The mood was lightened with the sharing of popcorn, chocolate, laughter and smiles... as the ghosts and spirits made their own way home, empty handed.

## Sapa O'Chau Café opens for business

Honeymooning newlyweds, Ben and Dani Thornton-Walker, heard about Sapa O'Chau via [Facebook](#). They spent one month with Shu, Peter and the Sapa team, and whilst Dani was teaching at the centre, Ben was honoured to be training a group of students at the newly opened [Sapa O'Chau Café](#).

Mr Thi, Miss Khu 1, Miss Khu 2, Mr Ban, Mr Chin, Mrs Tung, Mr Pay, Mr Do and Vietnamese volunteer Miss Mai were all extremely keen

to learn the inner workings of the business and how they would eventually go on to run the Café on their own.

Ben said, "Watching the students develop and grow in confidence as the weeks past was inspiring and extremely humbling. I've taken so many positive experiences from my time here. Some of these have been; watching the confidence of the students grow as they became more

comfortable speaking to the guests visiting the Café, conquering the art of making our now famous Hot Chocolate and O'Chau Tea, and simply being there every day, ready, keen and eager to get involved and do the best job they can.

Sapa O'Chau truly is an inspirational organisation that is helping the people who need it most at a grassroots level. We wish everybody involved the best of luck for the future."



Dani & Ben celebrate Women's Day at the Sapa O'Chau Cafe



Dung & Shu visit Saigon with CSIP

## Profit for Purpose

The Centre for Social Initiatives Promotion (CSIP) is a Vietnamese non-profit organization with the purpose of supporting, developing and funding new social enterprises. From over 200 applicants, Sapa O'Chau was selected as one of their 2011 'Start-Up Level' projects.

CSIP invited Shu Tan and Dung Cú to Ho Chi Minh City for a 'Training Workshop on Leadership of Social Enterprises', 13-16th

of March. Shu said, "We are glad to learn so many new things about the social enterprise model and business plan, especially the building of the organizational structure of social entrepreneurship. Also, the importance of leadership and the qualities required of a leader – If the fire is not in you, how can you share it with others?"

Shu and Dung have fond memories of a growing, dynamic and modern

metropolis where they had the opportunity to introduce people from far and wide to timeless Sapa.

"The training not only gave us the opportunity to acquire knowledge but also enabled us to connect with new friends and share experiences."

We are pleased to say "O'Chau" to all at CSIP, and send our greetings to all our brothers and sisters in social enterprise.



## Volunteer Profile – ‘Jenna & Makayla’

“Having to literally jump on the train to Lao Cai as it was about to depart gave the journey to Sapa a burst of energy. We were filled with excitement at the prospect of meeting new friends and had been looking forward to going to Sapa for many months.

My daughter Makayla (4) and I arrived in Sapa tired and Sapa itself was shrouded in fog so that we had no idea what it looked like or where we went when walking about. After a few days we were treated to some gorgeous sunny weather which revealed the beauty of the surrounding mountains. We are living at a guesthouse beside a beautiful calm lake that reflects the scenic panorama. The guesthouse is owned by a wonderful Vietnamese family who have been extremely welcoming and helpful to us.

We met up with Peter a few days after settling into Sapa and then met up with Shu and some other volunteers who all made us feel like part of the family. Makayla and I joined the class at the school for a few days and really enjoyed getting to know the enthusiastic students. They played some very fun games and we all laughed and giggled our way through the lessons.

Makayla attends Vietnamese school during the week and I go to the Centre and teach the students. We are lucky to get people who are visiting Sapa to come into the classroom and contribute by playing games, speaking with and reading with the students. Some other volunteer teachers and I have started to implement more reading, speaking and spelling activities to help the students learn English.

A day at Sapa O’Chau consists of coming into the classroom, greeting the class and any visitors that are there, asking the students for the day/date/year and then doing a word search or playing a group game such as a Chinese Whispers. After this we usually break up into groups and continue with either reading, comprehension or writing. Next there is a break in the middle of the day from 11am until 2 pm. In the afternoon students continue with group work and then come together for an Art, Sport or Music activity.

It has been great to get to know the students and find out about them. It has also been very easy to be in a classroom with them as they are so eager to learn and once you gain their trust they will listen and participate.”

[Read Jenna's Sapa O'Chau Blog](#)



Makayla & Shu's daughter Ngoc Chau



Jenna & Shu



Jenna's pet croc caused quite a stir!

## A Case Study – Lessons from Sapa O’Chau

[Dr. Elisabeth Piedmont-Marton](#), volunteer, friend, and supporter of Sapa O’Chau, attended the [4th International Conference on Hmong Studies](#), held at Concordia University, USA, March 30-31st, 2012.

This conference provided opportunities for emerging and established scholars to share their research on Hmong-related topics, to inspire and motivate students to engage in scholarly research, and to

recognize distinguished scholars for their work in the field of Hmong Studies.

It was sponsored by the [Center for Hmong Studies](#), directed by Dr. Lee Pao Xiong, which exists to track, document, research, develop and teach the long history, the current conditions, and future trajectory of an international community in the midst of transition.

Elisabeth’s paper, ‘*Big Ideas and Small Steps*:

*Lessons from a Hmong Empowerment Organization in Sapa, Vietnam*’, was one of only twenty-five proposals accepted. Many people attended her talk, and were very interested to hear about what Shu, Peter and the many other volunteers are doing in Sapa. She was honored to represent Sapa O’Chau and looks forward to attending again in 2014 and sharing even more good news!



Elisabeth on the paddy tight rope!

### Do you want to support us?



Pledge a Donation to Sapa O'Chau!  
Email: [info@sapaochau.org](mailto:info@sapaochau.org)

Or donate via PayPal  
[www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)

### Do you want to Volunteer?

Find out more about our volunteer opportunities!  
Email: [info@sapaochau.org](mailto:info@sapaochau.org)

### Do you want to find out more?

Visit us on Facebook  
[Sapa-OChau](https://www.facebook.com/Sapa-OChau)

Visit our YouTube Channel  
[www.youtube.com/user/sapaochau](http://www.youtube.com/user/sapaochau)

Follow Us on Twitter  
[www.twitter.com/sapaochau](http://www.twitter.com/sapaochau)

Visit our Website



Mr. Do - First Café manager

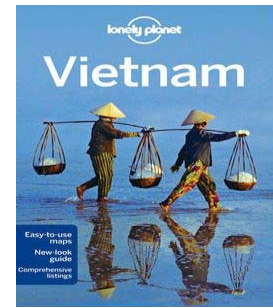
## Lonely Planet - Vietnam 2012

Following our visit from travel writer [Brett Atkinson](#) last year, Sapa O'Chau is very pleased to announce our inclusion in the new [Lonely Planet](#) guide to Vietnam, 2012.

Heralded as "a brilliant organization helmed by the live wire Shu Tan", the Lonely Planet devotes 164 words to Sapa O'Chau, in

a book renowned for being concise.

The Sapa section carries a special info box, 'Building A Stronger H'mong Future' which talks glowingly about our volunteering opportunities, our treks and homestays and even our guided ascent of Mt. Fansipan's 3143 meters!



## Invite Mr Wright

Following last year's visit from travel show legend [Ian Wright](#) and his team, we are happy to announce that the show featuring Sapa O'Chau is now airing on [TLC](#). Ian visited Sapa O'Chau for the second

series of 'Invite Mr Wright' and spent several days with Shu as his guide to the villages and people of Sapa. Shu even managed to get him an invitation to a Red Dao wedding in Ta Phin. Ian volunteered at

the Centre, teaching photography with his flashy [Canon](#) cameras, and then put on an exhibition of the students' pics at the Café. The students loved his visit and enjoyed being part of the show. [Full Listings](#)

## Student Profile – Mr Do

When a trip was booked through Sapa O'Chau Trekking to Bac Ha market recently, trainee tour guide and student of Sapa O'Chau, Mr Do was asked if he would be the trekking guide. For 20 year old Mr Do from Sau Chou village it was a trip of many firsts. First time

as a tour guide, first time out of Sapa, first time in a car and first time in a hotel. What an adventure and what an experience for this young student!! Next came the opening of the Café and a trainee manager was needed. Mr Do again put his hand up and is now capably managing the café (with a

little help from Peter) Mr Do is a perfect example of the skills that our students are taught not only through the Centre but also through our vocational training. These skills will help the students apply for work in many different industries both in Sapa and beyond.

## CONTACT US



[www.sapaochau.org](http://www.sapaochau.org)

Newsletter enquiries:  
[admin@sapaochau.org](mailto:admin@sapaochau.org)

General enquiries:  
[info@sapaochau.org](mailto:info@sapaochau.org)

Email: [info@sapaochau.org](mailto:info@sapaochau.org) Telephone: +84 203 771 166 Mobile: +84 915 351 479  
Add: 08 Thac Bac Street,  
Sapa Town, Lao Cai, Vietnam