



## VIETNAM:



« Day Seven - Hill Tribes and Cascading Mountainsides, Sapa

Day Nine – Water Puppets and Weasel Shit Coffee, Hanoi »

## Day Eight - The Colonel

June 18th, 2007 by ben



"Oooh, Merci Beaucoup!"

Sharing our minibus from Sapa back to Lao Cai train station, where we would climb aboard our night train back to Hanoi, was a 72 year-old Vietnamese military colonel and his beautiful ageless wife, a military doctor. With 60 years of service he'd seen some of the most intense fighting in this country's history, first against the French and then against the Americans. The French left Vietnam in the 50's and since then, up until recently, the speaking of French has been a point of contention. Our Colonel, not having spoken the language for god knows how long, was happy to try and communicate however.

"Mon Francais est mauvais," (My French is bad) he said laughing as his wife offered us some lychees.

"No, tres bien, tres bien", replied Naouel, our French speaking portal into the colonels life and past.

He was a wonderful old man, always smiling and laughing, drinking his beers and trying to convince his wife to join him in one of the cutest old couple exchanges I've seen in a long time.

We learned about his time in the notorious VC tunnels used when fighting both the French and the Americans. The tunnels were one of the primary banes to both enemy forces. The stories I've heard of what were termed 'tunnel rats', American soldiers trained to explore these vast underground tunnel systems, being killed by a myriad of ingenious booby traps are disturbing. But, the cramped living conditions for the North Vietnamese soldiers must have been intolerable.

ABOUT BEN

MISSION

TRAVEL PLAN

GALLERY

VIDEOS

SEND TO A FRIEND

### Archives

July 2007

June 2007





Earlier this morning, we awoke to a pancake feast at the home stay then continued to trek through the hillsides. We passed through a bamboo forest filled with massive golden butterflies where, after much hassling on my part, Ping sang us a traditional H'mong song about working the fields. It was beautiful and her voice blew us away. We soon passed by a waterfall, where Morgan swam, then arrived in the town of Glang Ta Chai, meeting up with Astrid, Hugh, Mat and their guide for lunch. Here we had our first and only encounter with Dzao people – the women's elaborate clothing given additional appeal, by their plucked eyebrows, shaved foreheads and large red turban-like headdresses.



Motorbike Taxi's rode us back into town.

---

This entry was posted on Monday, June 18th, 2007 at 10:34 am and is filed under Day eight. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.

---

### Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)



