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VVG ~ Cua Lap Resort Project

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VUNG TAU*

The southern coastal province of BaRia-Vung Tau has adopted a bold plan to develop its potentials in tourism, fisheries and petroleum.

It needs a bold plan. The city today is but faded elegance of what it once was and what it can yet become. For now, and until the opening of the Cua Lap Resort, it is simply "Oil City," dominated by PetroVietnam and its various endeavors in gas and oil recovery, along side honky-tonk entertainment for the lowest and noisiest elements of the masses.

Favored with wonderful beaches, the hotels are not more than 1 star but are called 3 star. They cater to the rowdy hoi-poli who fill the city attractions on and off the beach for only two weekends a year: those near to Reunification/ Labor Day on April 29-May 1, and National Day on September 2.

On other weekends, and always during the week, the beaches in Vung Tau City are nearly empty. These photos were taken on an autumn weekend in year 2000 when the skies were partly cloudy and the temperature range for the day was from 82 -88 degrees F.

		
<p>Highway 51 in Vung Tau City is empty at 2:00 PM on an average weekend afternoon.</p>	<p>The main back-beach road connecting with down-town Vung Tau, empty on a typical weekend afternoon.</p>	<p>Paradise Resort on the back beach, with its D+ rated golf course and entertainment center, is the current major weekend attraction.</p>

The Cua Lap Resort is a mere 50 miles (80 km) and (by opening) less than a one hour drive from down town Ho Chi Minh City. It is nearly 8 miles (12 km) from Vung Tau City. See the location on our site maps. It will change the entire region, and transform Vung Tau into a city of 4 star wonders once envisioned nearly 100 years ago.

Located in the southern key economic zone that includes Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Dong Nai and Binh Duong provinces, BaRia-VungTau ranks among the wealthiest provinces in Vietnam. One of 55 provinces and special administration areas, in late 2004, it contributed six percent of the nations total GDP, was home to 4.6% of the nation's foreign invested projects, and exported more than 21 percent of the nation's total export value.

The province has a total surface area of 2,047 sq. km. Bordered on the west by HCMC, on the north by Dong Nai Province, on the east by Binh Thuan Province, and to the south by the sea. The 150 km long coastline faces the southern continental shelf, which is rich in marine resources, oil and gas. With an official population of less than 800,000 (unofficial population figures are only slightly higher at 1.5 million), the population is expected to reach five million by year 2010.

The per capita income reached US\$ 1,200 in 2004, higher than the nation's average. Per capita income excluding petroleum in 1997 was lower than the nearly \$1,500 in HCMC, yet nearly triple the national average. [For the nation's current economic indicators]

Tourism has been a strong economic sector in BaRia-VungTau for more than 150 years. Vung Tau has always been called the weekend retreat for the colonial city of Saigon and all through the war years with the Americans. In recent times, an impressive number of small hotels and guest houses have made a resurgence, along with numerous restaurants. Most notable are the sea food houses, and Restaurant Cay Bang 69 the most notable of them all.

With more than 3 million visitors to Vung Tau in 2000, there is still no four star hotel accommodation available in the entire province. Presently there are 2,840 rooms available. However, "three star" accommodations account for less than 500 rooms.

The Cua Lap Resort adjacent to the 11 million population of Greater Ho Chi Minh City fills a needed niche for an existing market that is completely without competition. There is nothing in the province that can meet the offerings of Cua Lap Resort.

A few hotels in Phan Thiet (3 hour drive away), distant Nha Trang (12 hour drive or 1 hour flight), or isolated DaNang (a 1.5 hour flight or 24 hour drive), are lovely. There are plans to build additional resort space in DaNang and Hue (one hour further away from DaNang by car). These will not ever compete with the draw of

the Cua Lap Resort for the existing and available market from HCMC.

Singapore and Hong Kong/Macao have nothing comparable to the Cua Lap Resort. Malaysia and Indonesia have lovely beaches, but even when the violence and local turmoil subside, they too are not near their nation's economic and financial centers.

Petroleum, associated and natural gas provides the major industrial base and economic support to the province. Neither the oil platforms nor shipping lanes are a problem. They are not in the vicinity or even within the tidal wash of the beach at Cua Lap. The planned presence of power generation stations producing 2,400 MW from the Phu My and Ba Ria thermal power generation stations supplies power to the Cua Lap Resort. However, the Resort has its own full back-up power generation station on site.

Port facilities are under current development to accommodate both sea and river traffic for vessels from 5,000 to 200,000 tones. A \$640 million proposal awaits the approval of the Vietnamese government. It is to build Vietnam's largest, deep-water seaport at Sao Mai-Ben Dinh for ships to 200,000 tones. It is backed by a consortium of companies from Japan and Singapore.

* Adopted in part from an article in Issue No. 2573 Viet Nam News p.2, October 9, 1998.

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