



▲ Weed Thriller

Rong Bien is a malt-flavoured refreshing drink sold in second hand plastic drink bottles. The colour of watered down coca-cola without the bubbles, *rong bien* is made from seaweed. The raw material is available in local markets for around VND60,000 per kilo. Add water and boil for 15 to 20 minutes then add sugar, stirring until dissolved. Best served on the rocks.

Cost: From VND8,000 depending on the container size.

Where: Tan Thien near Tan Binh fabric market.



▲ Banana Mamas

The equivalent of fruit roll ups with no artificial flavours, banana flats are made from semi-dried bananas, pressed and thinly sliced, then further dried. They are often sold by the same ladies who sell waffles, and can be eaten as is, or warmed. They taste exactly like they look — think chewy dried bananas.

Cost: VND3,000 to VND5,000 per slice.

Where: Dong Khoi near the Opera House.



▲ Meet and Greet

Available all year round, greeting cards range from your basic printed 'Happy Whatever' model to exquisitely ornate hand-crafted mini artworks, with the majority falling somewhere in between. The pick of the bunch are the hand-cut pop-up cards with delicate shapes perfectly cut to form complex figures that leap from the centre of the card.

Cost: VND10,000 depending on your bargaining skills.

Where: Han Thuyen near Notre Dame Cathedral.



▲ Hair We Go

Most roadside products are simple necessities or impulse buys, however, it seems haircuts are also a spur of the moment thing. Barbers set up shop anywhere with enough room for a chair and a hook to hang a mirror on, offering haircuts, shaves and ear cleaning. It can be slightly disturbing walking down the street after they've gone and seeing tufts of hair peeking from the cracks.

Cost: VND10,000

Where: On Nguyen Huu Canh, towards An Phu, or Ngo Van Nam, Q1



▲ Gone Fishin'

There is something fascinating about seeing hundreds of clear bags of goldfish racked horizontally on the back of a motorbike, although the idea of the bike in motion makes you wonder if fish get seasick. It would be interesting to know the death rate of these fish, as after several hours under the harsh city sun, they could probably be sold as boiled in the bag goldfish snacks.

Cost: Small single-coloured fish VND10,000; multicoloured fish VND15,000.

Where: Dinh Tien Hoang near the intersection with Phan Dang Luu.



▲ Fuel the Fire

Contrary to the assumption that sandalwood woodchips are sold as part of a religious rite, woodchips are actually used for fuel. Not only do they not have religious significance, but they are also not sandalwood, but rather mixed timbers. This explains why they are not common in Ho Chi Minh City, and more often seen in remote rural locations.

Cost: Unconfirmed.

Where: Hoi An near the local market.