

# Tunnel Rats Tour in Vietnam

NINA and Winston Gould were privileged to be part of a small group to travel to Vietnam recently with Sandy MacGregor who was the first engineer in the Australian army to explore the Viet Cong's underground city in Vietnam in the 1960's war.

The following is an account of their travels through Vietnam.

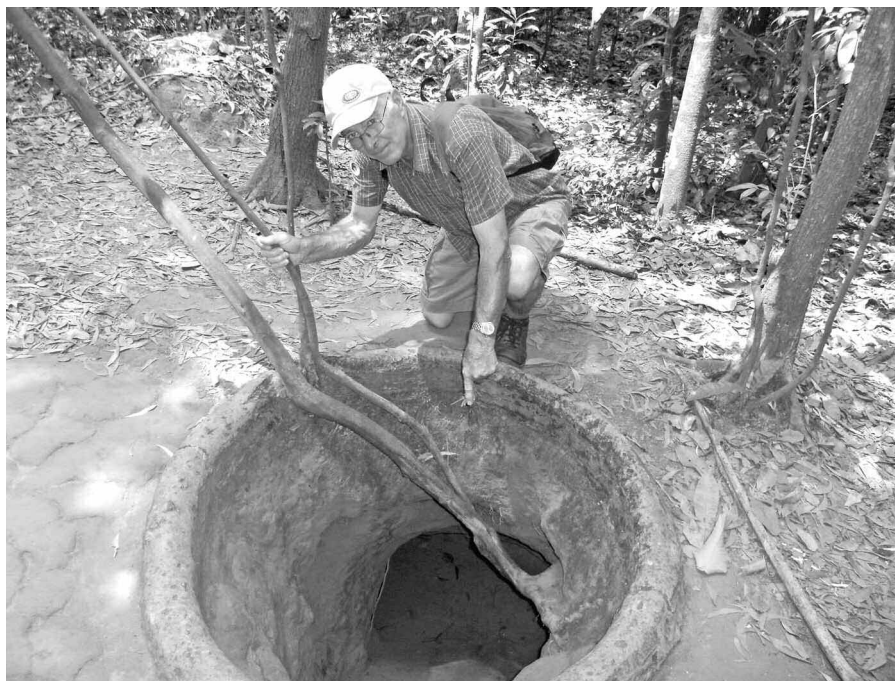
We realised how little we were really told about this war that we call 'The Vietnam War'. From information we were given when in Vietnam it is generally referred to as the American war and the American invasion. However, the people seem to have put the war-torn past behind them and are eager to share their cultural traditions with visitors and tourists from other countries.

An excellent account of our tour 'The War Within' has been reported by journalist and author of crime stories, Mark Dapin in the Saturday Age (Good Weekend) last Sat March 24th. Mark travelled with us on the tour interviewing and recording Sandy's impressions present attitudes to the war and his recollections of the time in 1965 when he was captain of 3 Field Group Engineers (sappers)

Jimmy Thomson, journalist and co-author of Sandy Macgregor's books 'No Need For Heroes' and 'The Tunnel Rats' also came on the tour, so we were very fortunate to have experts on war history leading the group. Only a few differences of opinion between the local Vietnamese guides and our group leaders occurred.

Some of the underground tunnels were made just for tourists and were not authentic according to Sandy, however there are many real ones at Cu Chi where the tunnels are long, narrow, dark and meander for many kilometres. Approximately 300 kms of tunnels, which were originally built in the war against the French, were used by the Viet Cong for protection, weapon storage, schools and hospitals.

After the Tunnel Rats Tour ended we travelled on to Hanoi and then to Sa Pa in the mountainous north of Vietnam, near the Chinese border. Here there are traditional villages with 24 minority groups, each with their own unique language, traditions and colourfully decorated clothing. The terraced hills were being



**Tunnelled:** Winston Gould at Cu Chi tunnel entrance that has been enlarged for tourists.

hoed by women of the village in preparation for the annual planting of rice.

Traditional, primitive farming methods continue to be used

with hand hoeing, water buffalo and a clever use of water reticulation.



**Uplifting experience:** Nina and Winston at the temple of Literature in Hanoi with school group



**Clever:** Winston with Black H'Mong villagers. Traditional, primitive farming methods continue to be used with hand hoeing, water buffalo and a clever use of water reticulation.

All photos supplied by Winston and Nina Gould