

# French software specialist left Paris to live in Hanoi: Some people joke that maybe my previous life was Vietnamese

When I first arrived in Noi Bai in 2011, David Lapetina felt like coming home. That is why the French software expert chooses to stick with Vietnam.

*As a Frenchman, why did you choose to live and work in Vietnam?*

First of all, I think it is for work. In our software industry, testing plays a very important role to ensure the quality of products delivered to customers without errors. However, in France, it is not easy to find human resources with sufficient skills and expertise in this field.

In this context, the two co-founders of our company have contacts with Vietnam, especially with some universities. Therefore, after a period of exploration, we decided to cooperate with a software testing company in Vietnam in 2011. I started this activity with one of my co-founders. . After less than a year, we have expanded our partnership in software development.

In 2017, our company opened a subsidiary in Hanoi before becoming part of TIBCO Software since the end of 2018. I am in charge of Research and Development Center (R&D) in Hanoi.

In the beginning, I often went to Vietnam for about 2-3 weeks every two months. That was enough time for me to really enjoy working and developing activities here. Therefore, when I had the opportunity, I almost moved completely to live and work in Vietnam in 2017.

In addition, I really like working with Vietnamese colleagues because I can learn a lot from them. I especially love living in Hanoi, the city with many beautiful and interesting museums like the Vietnam Women's Museum and the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology . Temple of Literature is also one of my favorite places.



Tôi yêu Việt Nam bằng cả trái tim và lý trí. Một vài người nói vui rằng có lẽ kiếp trước tôi là người Việt Nam.

**DAVID LAPETINA**

Hanoi is a very special city for me because of the blend of both ancient and modern features. The city has both very old temples and modern buildings. Hanoi gives me the feeling of endless exploration because in very new residential areas, suddenly there are charming old houses or a small temple.

On the street, bicycles sell bread or dumplings; frankincense that people often burn on the 1st and the fifteenth day; endless flows of vehicles, street food . all awaken people's senses. To me, this is like a lively poem written right in front of my eyes, full of flavor, color and sound.

*He once shared that when he walked down to Noi Bai International Airport for the first time, he felt like he was at home. What makes you feel that way?*

Every house has its own unique flavor or atmosphere. That is not easy to describe. But you can imagine that feeling like when you return home after a long journey. That was the feeling I got when I first stepped off the plane that landed at Noi Bai airport in June 2011.

*What he shared sounded like love at first sight. Is it too much to say that your love for Vietnam is your love affair?*

I believe it is a deeper love than that. I love Vietnam with all my heart and mind. Some people joked that perhaps my previous life was Vietnamese.

*Do you have any difficulty living in Vietnam?*

Life is always full of difficulties and challenges no matter where you are. Some of the difficulties associated with the fact that I am a foreigner and every other foreigner can be encountered despite a very hospitable Vietnam. For example, it's a cultural gap that leads to misunderstandings or the ability to understand languages ??(especially for older people).

I also live in a residential area with quite a few foreigners. So sometimes it's not easy to find special spices when I want to go to the kitchen to cook. But everything else I can manage.

*What do you find most impressed with Vietnam?*

It is a person's ability to rise up in the face of adversity. This country is always moving forward and not stopping.

In Vietnam, I have a feeling that change is a part of life and I believe so. Because, not what made us successful in the past will be the things that make future success. We can see this spirit in the very dynamic ecosystem of startups in Vietnam. Very few countries in the world can see the same thing. This business mindset is really a great asset.

*He shared that he was studying Vietnamese but found it very difficult, especially in the topic of eating. Do making friends with many Vietnamese people help you feel easier to learn this language?*

Make sure speaking and listening are the best ways when you learn a language. On my side, I learn Vietnamese because linguistic thinking reflects the way people think. And so language also has a great influence on culture. And in the opposite direction, culture affects back to language.

For example, with Vietnamese, past, present and future tenses are added with simple elements such as (already, are, will). This is quite different from French - the language that inherited grammar from ancient Greek with many different past, present and future tenses.



Việc người già và trẻ nhỏ được đặt ở vị trí trung tâm của những ngày Tết chính là như biểu tượng đẹp về vòng tuần hoàn của cuộc sống.

**DAVID LAPETINA**

This has taught me a lot about how people from both countries grasp the world and the events that occur in their lives and why they do so. Learning these things helped me fill that cultural gap.

Similarly, we can see some effects of French in Vietnamese on some technical words such as bolts, concrete, etc. So learning languages helps me understand my thoughts of Vietnamese people. Language is like a bridge connecting cultures between peoples.

*Have you ever celebrated Tet in Vietnam or not? How do you feel about the typical Vietnamese dishes that are often included in Tet meals?*

Yes, I've been to Tet in Vietnam a few times. Sometimes alone. It will be quite difficult to find a shop or a restaurant during Tet because they are all closed. However, this is a great time to enjoy the year. But I have to admit, I can't eat banh chung.

What I really like about Tet is the fact that this seems to be the end of winter. Tet to me is like symbolizing the beginning of a year, and starting a new life. By that time, the winter had passed and everyone welcomed the spring. We can feel this atmosphere both outside of society and at work: Tet marks a new beginning.

This is quite different from in France where the New Year begins in early winter. So even though the day has become longer after December 21 every year, we still have to endure at least 3 more cold months before spring comes.

Going back to the New Year theme, the fact that the old and young are placed at the center of these days is like a beautiful symbol of the life cycle. That after Winter (death), it will come Spring (life). It also teaches us that life is the most powerful development on earth.

*Some Vietnamese say that traditional Tet should be abandoned to have a chance to keep up with the development of Western countries. As a foreigner working in Vietnam, what do you think about this view?*

As far as I know, most Western countries take vacations throughout the year - where economic activities take place very exciting just before the holidays and most do not take place during the holidays. In Europe, during the week from mid-Christmas to January 1, the economy slows down a bit.

In France, for example, we also have summer vacations and during these occasions, most companies (except in the travel industry) face a slowdown.

Having breaks during the year is quite common. And I believe that the Tet holiday does not take place at the same time as the Western year-end holiday of the Western countries, contributing to such views or prejudices, especially since the Vietnamese economy was opened with world.

Personally, I need to accept cultural differences. And considering the fact that many families are scattered all over the country, because of their livelihood, they have to travel far to do business. It would be great if they had the opportunity to meet again a few days, at least once a year. I believe that this will cultivate family cohesion and the strength of the country.

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## MANG TINH THẦN VÕ HỌC VƯỢT QUA THÁCH THỨC ĐÒI THƯỜNG

*In Vietnam today, studying abroad or working abroad is still the wish of many people. However, it cannot be acknowledged that many foreigners are coming to Vietnam to work. In your view, what is the point that Vietnam attracts foreigners to live and work?*

I cannot represent other foreigners and my thoughts with some data are just a single opinion. But for me, the reason I want to work in Vietnam is because I have a feeling that in the near future, in terms of economy and lifestyle, this place will soon develop, similar to France or other countries. Other development.

I also see many opportunities to build something here. When discussing with others about this, I have more hope that everyone will progress together and make great things together. In Vietnam, we feel dynamism and growth.

*In addition to his role as a software expert, he is also well-known in Vietnam as the coach Ju Jitsu, a martial art native to Brazil. Why did you choose to practice this sport and try to spread it in Vietnam?*

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) was born in the early 20th century through a Judo master, Mitsuyo Maeda. This partly explains how the moves are somewhat similar between the two martial arts. However, Judo focused on the strike while BJJ used the main moves while lying on the ground.

In Brazil, Maeda was acquainted with a local businessman named Gastao Gracie. In response to his business help, Maeda accepted martial arts instruction for Gastao's son Carlos. After learning from Maeda, Carlos taught it to his relatives and BJJ gradually formed through the development of the Gracie family. Therefore this martial art is also known as "Gracie Nhu Nhu".

When I came to Vietnam in 2011, this martial art was not popular yet. So I got involved with people who are passionate about BJJ and tried to promote this martial art. The reason is because I really believe that BJJ is very useful in life and many people can practice, regardless of age, young or male.



*Each martial art has its deep philosophy. What is the philosophy in Ju Jitsu?*

Jiu Jitsu means "the art of flexibility" and "the art of lightness". For me, the famous allegory of the great tree mocked the weakness of the reed but was blown away by the wind and the reed wasn't the perfect illustration of this. BJJ's philosophy is that with the techniques you practice, even a smaller person can defeat a bigger opponent.

*How does practicing martial arts help you face difficulties and challenges in life?*

In many martial arts with different sets of rules and techniques, there is a common but very useful lesson in the life we learn: Even if you work hard, you can still do not win. But if you really work hard, you will not always lose.

BJJ teaches you about humility and perseverance. BJJ also shows you a lot about yourself, especially how you react when faced with pressure or adversity.

*In the end, the most important thing is not whether you win or lose but how you behave: You give up or you continue to fight, do you find a reason when you lose or you are seeking to improve yourself? and become better?*

The feeling of antagonism when practicing BJJ is like a miniature life: you will face adversity and in a finite amount of time. So how to use this time fund? How will you behave when faced with end-to-end pressures?

The only difference in Jiu Jitsu is that after every game, you have the opportunity to correct mistakes and take advantage of what you have done well.

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