



What About Vietnam - Series 2 – 21

The Fun of trail marathons in Vietnam

Kerry Newsome: [00:00:00] Xin Chau and welcome to what about Vietnam today, I'd like to welcome David Lloyd to the program. And before we chat with David, I'm going to talk him up a little bit because he's got a really great résumé to support what he does.

Just good for everyone to know just where he comes from and a little bit about him. Firstly, David's originally from the U.K. He's now living and based in Hoi An, which you would know from some of my other episodes, is a beautiful place in Vietnam. His background includes journalism and photojournalism. He's had worked published in The New York Times and also written guidebooks on Vietnam and Laos. So he's no slouch, if that's the best way to describe him.

Lots of knowledge, I think gained about Vietnam accumulated doing that, I would expect. He's also full time sport and race director of all events for Topas Travel, and he's been doing that since 2006 when he was involved in the original race. And he's going to tell us a little bit about what that looked like then to what it looks like now. And when I talk about race, we're talking about the Vietnam Trial series, which I'm sure if you are interested in that kind of thing, that will definitely come up on your radar. So, David, welcome to the program. But before we get into anything in depth, I have just probably a quick question with the slightly long answer. Tell us what you love most about Vietnam.

David Lloyd: First of all, thank you for the very kind intro. Very nice. So when I first came to Vietnam in 2011, and that was thanks to my wife, Becky, it was her decision. So, she was a primary school teacher back in London. And she had six weeks holidays, of course, as a result. And one of those holidays, she took off without me and explored Lao, Cambodia and Vietnam. And when she came back shortly after that, we got married. We'd always spoken about living overseas somewhere. And so she'd said Vietnam would be a good place to start for six months based on what she'd seen on those travels. So, the plan was Vietnam for a few months, six months maybe, and then we were going to move on. But essentially, very long story short, we never did move on. We both absolutely fell for the place. And as you know, it's a very easy country to fall in love with.

[00:02:42] And so here we are, 10 years and we've never really never looked back and certainly never regretted the decision to come here first.

Kerry Newsome: Okay. Now, when I think about running, I think of it as a very solo sport, it's like something that you can enjoy for many different reasons. But sometimes it's the sport or the game that you actually play with yourself, so to speak. So before we get into the competitive side of the sport, which you've certainly taken to a new level, there's lots of talk about running and walking and that kind of experience now, especially during Covid, post Covid as a way of keeping positive and for our mental health. Tell us what you love about running and or cycling. What is it? What does it do for you?

David Lloyd: It's a question that is a big question. What I love about running. Well running for me really started with running in the mountains in Wales. And that is both a solitary pursuit and something that you can enjoy with friends. So a lot of mountain running is very sociable because you'd go out, particularly if you're not trying to run fast. You go out with a group and it's about, you know, enjoying each other's company and enjoying the beauty of the mountains.

I also used to go out there solo so I would drive up camp and then run for 20 or 30k or so and then come down somewhere completely random in in a valley and hitchhike back. And something that I loved about that was a fact. You could run off a mountain in the middle of nowhere in Wales, stick your thumb out, and it would generally take

maybe one car would go by before you'd get a lift. And so that would kind of really, you know, fulfil your faith in humanity with other people who were kind enough to pick you up and take you back.

So you've got a lot of things out of that day running in the mountains. But road running is not really my thing.

But I see a lot of people get a lot out of that in the same way in terms of, you know, personally, you can run and get very fit and run alone and clear your mind and distress. Also, a particularly here in Vietnam, people do it in groups.

You've got huge run clubs; social run clubs and some companies have run clubs. And it's a great way for people to get together. And it's also a great leveller.

So whether you're the CEO of a company or you're just starting out in a company or you're a student or whatever you do, everybody is pretty much the same when they get the trainers on and go for a run. I think that's a massive part of why people love that mountain running. And the cycling is a similar thing, really. It can be great in a group or great alone. But the added benefit of cycling is you can go further. So it's a lot of exploration, really finding out about a country with adventures about that. So, yeah, elements of adventure as well, particularly in Vietnam.

You can often have the feeling here in Vietnam that you might be the first person to have ridden that road or one of the first people anyway. So, yeah.

So pretty much unbeatable, I would say. Unbeatable way to discover a country. And also, of course, you're getting fit and healthy and enjoying yourself and generally with a big smile on your face. So lots to recommend both.

Kerry Newsome: Yes. And I think it is that that feeling of when you are out running, experiencing the fresh air, the environment, that togetherness, as you say, with people in a safe way.

But if we if we now focus on the Vietnam trial series, as I understand it, that kind of kicked off around 2013 and I think your numbers were around about two or three hundred people at the time. And now we're looking at 2021. And you're thinking that,

well, when we spoke last that there could be up to 10,000 runners across your trials series. That's a massive growth. How do you explain that growth in participation going back to 2013 when it started?

It began at the NSA where the TOPAS Eco lodges at the time, and it was the General manager at the time, as he loved mountain running the same as I love mountain running. And a few of the other key people he pulled in, as essentially volunteers to work on that first race. And at that time, it's fair to say there was no mountain running or trail running seen at all in Vietnam. So yes you are right, about 200 runners. And of those, I would say around 10 where we're actually from Vietnam. So, when you look at it that way, it would have been pretty hard not to grow to some extent.

But the growth rate that we've seen has been huge. And it's an exponential beginning, certainly. So it was from 10 and then 200 people and then over the years essentially doubled, for a few years overall participation. But within that, the number of Vietnamese was growing fastest. So the appetite for adventure and mass participation sport in Vietnam has been growing hugely. I mean, I think back in 2013, I used to live next to the Canadian Independence Park in Hanoi. And you'd look out the window there or I'd run in there and it was pretty full of runners and people exercising and all sorts of running, walking, whatever. But they weren't joining the event because there weren't many events to join. And also, while it was busy in that park, it wasn't run like it is today. But now you run through there and you're weaving between people. So, it's not only the racing, but generally the participation in sport has increased here a lot.

Kerry Newsome: And you're right, I can remember coming to Vietnam, you know, you know, over 10 years ago. And the Vietnamese, generally speaking, apart from maybe yoga, meditation, that was starting to kick off. But, you know, they didn't have gyms, gyms, you know, initially were in hotels. And the only places that you could go to, and they were mainly for foreigners not the Vietnamese themselves, I didn't see that appetite.

But you're right, in the last 10 years now you've got volleyball on the beach, you've got running, you've got cycling, you've got gym clubs. You've got you know, the Vietnamese have really embraced sport and become, you know, definitely more active in that. So in talking about the trial series, I got to spend a little bit of time just having a look at some of the stories and the personal experiences from the runners themselves. Just

through looking at your website. I might add, before I go on, the aerial footage that you feature on your site. So I'm going to put links, etc. to the website for that so that people can just have a look at the space and the environment that they're going to get to experience if they join one of your trial series.

But talking about some personal experiences, I think there was one lady named Charmaine and, you know, they were talking about some of the aspects of the trial and about the fear of running downhill. And they were talking about just being aware, you know, and I'm talking to people who are obviously going to be examining their own fitness levels. So talk to us a little bit about, you know, running uphill and down dale, just about the fitness around running, you know, using poles and just managing heat, diet, dehydration, that kind of thing.

Can you talk to us a little bit about that? Because, yeah, I think that's something people will be thinking about if they're going to come and do something like this.

David Lloyd: Yeah, I mean, you mentioned I mean, she's a pretty extreme example. She's 100k champion.

Kerry Newsome: Oh, wow.

David Lloyd: I know her very well. She's an Aussie. And I remember her very well because as she crossed the finish line, she came right into my face and said, David, I hate you. I'm never doing this again. But with a big smile on her face. And she's a real character and she's really well liked, in the trailer community, but she's pretty extreme. So she might have said something about her ability downhill, but she's very modest, like she's very, very good up and down and with whatever you throw at her. But generally we have from 10K up to 100k.

So the Charmaine's of this world can join 100K, but normal people can choose 10K, 15k, 22k and then we have 42k and 70k. But the ability to run, I mean run is a key word here, because while it's called trail running. Even someone like Charmain, who's winning 100K is spending a lot of that time walking, because it's so steep up there, the fastest way to get up as the economy running economy wise, actually to walk quite often, to walk as fast as you can.

If you're if you're a good top runner. But if you're a normal person, you will be walking quite a lot anyway. So it's about running when you can on an easy trail, and then the ups and the downs, you just take them on as well as you can do.

So for some people, that means walking uphill fast. For some people it means just getting to the top so they can get down the other side again.

Yes, just keep moving. I mean, some people call it when it gets longer distance or longer time, like Jasmine Paris we just interviewed. She's one of the best entrepreneurs in the world. We just interviewed her for our website and she said it's like one long picnic going on an ultra run, and it's about being the best at picnicking and running at the same time.

It's like an eating contest with running thrown in. You've got to keep getting your food in, and finding out what works for you food wise. So, yeah, for people who are who like to eat and be active, it's like the ultimate sport, really. So, yeah, a lot about eating, keeping, eating and keeping moving and yeah. Like for new runners or mountain runners or mountain walkers, whatever you want to call it, it's really about enjoying making sure you enjoy yourself.

David Lloyd: So yeah, certainly some training is needed, but if as long as people start off with the shorter distance events don't bite off more than they can chew at the beginning, then they should have a good time and then sort of gradually progress through the to the longer distances, if that's what they want to do.

But yeah, for most of the runners are those eight or ten thousand. It's not really about eventually running and it's much more about having a good time and getting out onto the trails and having an adventure that they would never normally have. You know, versus sitting behind a desk in the city nine to five.

Kerry Newsome: From your experience, do people come to Vietnam ahead of the series to do any, like pre training or do they kind of land arriving to Hanoi? Have a good sleep next day. They're into it. Or do they kind of come a couple of days ahead and kind of acclimatize? Is that something that you see?

David Lloyd: Yeah, the people I would say definitely the people who are coming in from overseas, like a lot of our runners, a regional would be Singapore, Hong Kong, and they would tend to come in with a day or two. One thing is so they can just get over that flight. And another thing is so they can enjoy being here.

If you're going to fly to Vietnam, it's not normally just about the running for most people. They want to see a bit of Hanoi before they come up to the mountains, enjoy some food, see the cafe culture. So, yeah, they tend to come in earlier and I absolutely recommend people have that time. Of course they should. And then ideally they should stay for a week afterwards as well and go around it and enjoy what Vietnam has to offer. But people are coming from Australia, like I say, like the Charmaine's of this world. And generally they'd be having a week or 10 days holiday because it's it's a long flight. And, yeah, they want to make the most of it for sure.

Kerry Newsome: And, you know, people coming from the UK and Europe the same, it's it's a bit of a journey! So why not? Hey, look, you talk about the food, I had a look at your organic pumpkin soup and recovering green smoothies. I mean, they sound pretty awesome. Are they on the menu? Are they part of the picnic race?

So, yeah. So the picnic element, people tend to bring quite a lot of picnic stuff in in their own backpacks.

But what we provide is so that what specifically is from Christian, who's a chef we have up at the Topas Eco Lodge & Sapa and actually now he's general manager of the Topas Riverside Lodge, and he's big into sort of farm to table, and organic as much as possible. And we partner up there with a lot of the growers. So we know where our rice comes from. We have people who grow the fruit that we purchased directly from.

And the food actually goes through the eco lodge in a nice circular economy, and that the food waste we have, we'll then turn into compost, which you give to the farmers or to just straightforward animal feed to give to the pigs.

And so he's really into this. And also he grows his own vegetables. But yeah, that's his recipe. And that proves pretty popular on checkpoint. So for the longer run, as they get food on the way around the race, if they're doing 70K, they'll get fed on the way. But all runners, when they come to our finish line, they get meals. So at the eco lodge that's prepared at the eco lodge.

And if we do a race, so we do races in other places which don't finish conveniently on our own property, they finish in the middle of nowhere in a field.

And that's kind of more fun in a way, how it works. But we have a chef, Ben, who's become amazing at setting up like a "field" kitchen, almost military style. And he creates food for 4500 runners. In the kitchen, and he'll say employ local people, and he'll bring his own canteen, but then he employs local people in the area and just creates like a crack team of cooks and they knock up this great food. So we always have that pumpkin soup, but then we'll have another dish that's more local to each area generally.

So we have a beef stew, for the meat eaters. And then we've got the pumpkin for the non-meat eaters and we have a load of different vegetable options and local fruits. And so, like, almost like a buffet. When you finish the run, because whether you've run 10K or 100k you tend to be quite hungry. And actually even the 10K runners, they tend to take hours and hours to finish the 10K because it's on the trail and it can be rigorous.

And they also like to take a lot of photos along the way. So we take a long time and so when they arrive it can be quite late lunch. So they're quite happy to get stuck into the end to be prepared. That's actually one of my favorite aspects of our races, is to watch what he creates in this, because it's just a field with nothing in it, and then it's overrun with 4-5,000 people. So, a little shout out to the team.

It's a pretty amazing, fantastic job.

Kerry Newsome: So talk to us about these locations now that are involved in each of the trials. So I think there's 4 locations all throughout this now?

David Lloyd: That's very, very current of you because you are just adding one, the fourth one in June that's just about to come up.

Perhaps your listeners who've been to Vietnam or certainly if they are thinking about coming to Vietnam, they know Sapa and if they're researching coming, they'd know it is the sort of class tour.

[00:18:22] But beyond that are the grand big high mountains and the rice terraces, the majestic kind.

Every scenery that you think of when you think of Vietnam that's up there, with all of the ethnic minority villages amongst it. And so the big draw of running there is, like I say this, the highest mountains in Vietnam and perhaps the most picturesque rice terraces that exist/

And also it's the first one we started in 2013. So sort of seen as the original and the biggest. It's the hardest. You can throw a lot of superlatives at that race. So that's Vietnam, an amazing marathon. And this year we had 100 hundred miles of that race, which is for the truly insane who want to run 168, which is. Yeah, completely ridiculous.

But anyway, they want to try it. So we're giving it to them this year.

And then we have Moc Chau, which is that one I would say would be famous within Vietnam, but not well known at all outside. And what it's famous for here, is in just before Tet or Lunar New Year, it is the blossom season.

There you have a plum and apricot blossom flowers. And yeah, it's incredible. And people, from anywhere love it. People here completely go mad for it. So, you're running through these incredible dreamlike scenes of Blossoms.

[00:19:44] And actually that area also has a lot of different ethnic minority villages and just incredible trails.

And then the third one is the more extreme case.

David Lloyd: [00:19:58] That's four hours south of Hanoi. But I mean, you ask where it is and even people in Hanoi would say, where is that? When we first found. Yeah, that's why I'm saying they didn't know it.

[00:20:09] So, it was pretty much off the map when we went there and there was one hotel there with a pool, that wasn't very well known yet, and that was 2017.

And now it's becoming more on the maps. If you say to looking to someone in Hanoi now, they'll know where you mean. But that area is pure magic.

And almost got everything apart from the beach that you think of in Vietnam in this small microcosm area. So amazing. Rice terraces, limestone mountains, ethnic beautiful ethnic minority villages that look like they haven't changed for years. And all some trails from a business perspective, really excellent runnable trails and a lot of diversity on the on the course as well.

[00:21:00] But it's one of those places where no matter how useless you are, no matter how bad your camera phone is, you can't fail to take an amazing photo of that place.

[00:21:08] So it's a no brainer to a race there from a beauty point of view, but from a logistics and accommodation point of view, it was a daft idea because that's in 2017

there was not much there and you could barely get a bus there. So we had to do a lot of work, a lot of work to set that one up. But it was worth it for sure. It's an amazing race, that one.

Kerry Newsome: So that's been a matter of people taking selfies along the way. Yeah. You know, it's Vietnam. Yeah. So what's the fourth one.

David Lloyd; The fourth one. We're going back to our roots and that one's coming up. In June, and that's going to be called VMD Kang, so Kang is an area of Sapa that people wouldn't know and that's where the race is going to finish and it's going to go for the 50 K, it's going to start in Saper and go up onto the high mountain ridge, which is so it's a bridge run style race, like a sky run style, which has never been done in Vietnam before, is another first.

[00:22:06] And also it's a great one if people will do the 100 mile later in the year, they can test part of that route. But more importantly, most people will never, ever run the 100 mile, even a good 70 K run. They won't do it because it's, as I say, ridiculous is the word. So this is a chance for people who are more normal to see that route, than the people who are very much not normal they'll do when they run the 100 miles. It's like opening up for more people and, you know, doing it in June. Is it?

Kerry Newsome: I mean, June, to me spells heat.

David Lloyd: Yeah, well, definitely I mean, we had the jungle marathon in May before we moved because it was so hot.

[00:22:50] But what we do is we start early.

[00:22:52] So to start times are really early and people who do these kind of things, tend to quite like getting up early, luckily.

[00:22:57] So the shorter distance runners will be done by the time it gets super hot. And then when we finish, there's a river right next to the Riverside Lodge.

So people will finish and then just go and jump into the cold River and hang out with some beers. I hope,I've got this image in my mind and I have everyone hanging out with a bit of cold beer in the river and just having a good time.

[00:23:19] But yeah, it will be hot. That will be a challenge. But one thing one thing is now everyone who's going to do it is going to be living in Vietnam, thanks to the borders being closed. So everyone will be acclimatized and ready for sure.

Kerry Newsome: So talk to me a little bit about, you know, pre req's for the marathon. Like, is there an age barrier or age set that you take on and talk to us a little bit about the safety aspect of that. You know, if somebody kind of collapses along the way or, you know, is affected by heat or heat exhaustion. Talk to us a little bit about how you manage that.

David Lloyd: Yeah. So there is age limits. They vary depending on race.

And the one in in May that I was talking about, we had a higher minimum age limit because of that heat aspect there, actually. But so for the longer distances 21 & up, you've got to be 18. But a 10K is younger and it depends on the race. But you have to be with a parent or guardian who will run with you. So you sign a consent form for the kid. And so you're taking care of the kid who's coming along with you. And then we have a 5K which kids like. But, they of course have to be with parents or guardians to take them and to go along with them. But that 5K one is normally is in January. So that's the weather cool line.

And it's not very far and there's no big climb. So along the way we have lots of water stations with food, and fruits. We have fruits and water and electrolytes. So to the hydration aspect and every aid station, we have medical staff and then we have people on the course with we all have our phones dedicated for that race.

So it's not like you've got your Facebook and everything on that would just be a phone just purely for the race. And so if and if that phone rings, you answer, it doesn't matter what you do and you answer it. So that's for me and my key port management team. And we also have satellite phone. So when where out of reach, which we never really

are on most of these races, but we've also got back up satellite phone. So we've got a place pretty well, covered.

[00:25:31] And then we are very fortunate to be part of it. I'm not which is a used to be known for their hotel they had in the old quarter in Hanoi. And that's how our relationship with them goes back to the 90s as a company.

[00:25:46] But now they're in hot, they're in medical and they're about to open a massive hospital in Hanoi that's coming about how many beds. But it's got it's a colossal and we're lucky to have them as our medical partners.

So they have the most we've had seven doctors, two or three ambulances and 10 or 12 nurses from them. And then we supplement that with the medical team from the local area as well. So we have the local hospitals provide staff and ambulances and they're also on backup ready if anything happens. But, yeah, we luckily nothing has happened that's been major yet. So small issues with ankles and some dehydration issues, but nothing that hasn't been able to be sorted out within the day. So, yeah, we're we're lucky we talk a lot about drinking so. Well, if you come to our race on the start line, I'm generally there and I'm sure people think I'm like a broken record. But it's all that I remember to drink, remember to drink and remember to drink because especially at 4am on the start line for a long distance, it's not hot yet. People aren't thinking about they need to drink necessarily, especially newbies. So it's a of drilling and in checkpoints, I'm constantly reminding people to drink when they come to the checkpoint. So, yeah.

David Lloyd: So you definitely have to keep an eye on or keep a lookout. And remember, you've got to take care of these people on the course. But as I say, luckily nothing has happened major, no big issues yet.

Kerry Newsome: That's a great record. Just something else I noted about what you do, which I think is fantastic, that, you know, your marathons go to support some various charities, as in Operation Smile, Newborns, Vietnam, Blue Dragon.

How did that come about? I think that's a great, great way to contribute to the community. So talk to us a little bit about that.

David Lloyd: I can say this without sounding arrogant, because that wasn't my idea originally when it started in 2013.

[00:27:40] I think it was. The first race, if not the first, and very early on, it was decided that a portion of the race fees would go to charities and that's been up to 20 dollars per race fee for the longer distance one, and which is definitely unusual in terms of the percentage of the of the fee.

And so at the beginning of Operation Smile and local charities, what we do is split it 50 percent between all local projects sorry that we could manage in South because we'd been working there since the 90s and then 50 per cent to a national charity or international charity.

So that was all reaching Operation Smile and that's the race grew. And now I think we've given around 30 US dollars each. That's too much way too much for us to handle in local projects. And also I wanted to split it between more charities. So the first other one I brought on was newborns Vietnam, which I have a quite close relationship because there is a British charity and I was involved with them on a personal level, fundraising through challenges before, and they work to reduce neonatal mortality and critically ill babies. So they started in Danang and there's a great graph of what their impact was in Danang hospital. So it's it actually falls off a cliff, the mortality rate when they went in there and started working with them, because there's so many small things that you could do which made a huge difference with very little money. And now they want more long term bringing in the professors from UK, teaching hospitals and teaching here. And the idea is they teach and then the people here learn and then they teach. So it's sustainable for the for the long term. So hopefully at some point they won't be bringing people from Britain anymore and they'll move on to do other work as newborns.

[00:29:24] And then we also work with Blue Dragon, which is a Blue Dragon Children's Foundation. Now, that's a that's a fellow Aussie who started that one of yours. And he's amazing is Michael. So he started that as a as a kids charity, working with kids on the street in Hanoi, and that grew them to not only work with street kids, but also victims of human trafficking. So they do amazing work bringing people back from who've been trafficked to China.

And then they work on advocacy and they work on changing the law here in Vietnam to be able to be better attuned to these victims of trafficking, when they come back. And

they also have kids running club. Now, when we started working with them, we gave them free slots for the Emem and the who's an amazing guy. He was a former street kids, became their main, if not their head of social work and one of their top social workers working with the kids. And he set up the run club. And so we do that together now. So each week, once or twice, Lakita what people always go, one of our good runners, Brangwyn, goes along and coaches them and I'll go when I can when I'm in Hanoi. And yes, these kids are amazing. And they they know train once or twice a week, sometimes more. And then they come up and they run mostly the 10K because a young couple of them are doing 21. And not that it matters how good they are, but there are some also some pretty good talent. You can see those promising kids in that group, one or two.

[00:30:52] So it that's a great thing to be involved with for on many, many levels. And there are the charities we've worked with, but those are the top three we're working with now.

[00:31:04] Yeah, I know a little bit about the Blue Dragon because of a charity I support called the CEF Foundation. I don't know whether you know Linda Burn, but she's based in Hoi An. Yes. So I know from an education point in the trafficking side of things, I think is key for, you know, young and impressionable Vietnamese to be aware of the tricks and traps that they can be exploited by in that in that area. So it's great to see you involved with that. And of course the others as well. Operation Smile, Newborns, Vietnam. We might put some links to those charities and in the episode notes for sure.

Kerry Newsome: So in summary, if you were to give some advice to anyone considering this and as I said before, I'm sure across the globe, everyone listening is thinking of Vietnam as a place to come Post Covid because of just how well it's done as far as managing the Covid pandemic. But also because it does involve some great opportunities to do things like what you do.

[00:32:19] Ah, you know, what advice would you give them? You know, if they're thinking about this and joining one of your trials series, like train up, like get out, get really super fit and, you know, start doing some training in hot weather or I don't know anything like that.

[00:32:37] I'd say do it. I mean I would say anybody could do it. So you've got all.

[00:32:41] All of all shapes and sizes coming across the finish line, and you can either flip through and look at videos and you'll see that we do see people of all sorts of all walks of life doing it.

So let's say you want to do it. And if you if you have certainly not done some training, that would be a bit daft. And if you've done some longer a little longer walk before you come and have a crack at it, and try and do something of similar distance to what you're going to do, sign up for 10K, trying doing a 10K walk or run before you do it.

[00:33:06] But I would say for a start, a 10k one, if you're if you've never run before or walked.

Well yeah. Could be a good start or 21k. A lot of people do 21k off the bat.

Kerry Newsome: I mean actually I do 5k and I think I'm doing well ...ha!

If you look at it is a hike as a long hike then people will have a bit more confidence I think to go for something longer.

David Lloyd: But I mean here in Vietnam, people who just go up, sign up for 40k to and just do that first. But basically, we have some regulations about that to guide people that they shouldn't jump in the deep end.

But yeah, it's I doable. And for many people, almost all people, I'd say if you get something in a diary, it gives you that motivation to get out and run.

So, you know, the hardest thing about starting with running is, you know, getting out the door and that first kilometre course. But once you're out there and you've done the first km walk or run, it's worth it.

You feel a lot better and you start to feel like you're moving better. But it's that initial part. But for a lot of people, just getting that done it's just it's not going to happen without some reason. And a reason can be making a race. But in a race that you don't say it, whether it's a 5K, you know, in your local city or a 10K in Vietnam, getting something in there to motivate you is key, I think.

But I think if that's if you're in Australia and that is a 21 K in the mountains of Vietnam and a holiday to get in shape for, I think these are two pretty good carrots. Yeah, why

not. Of course it's a takes a bit of a leap of faith to book something now of course. But I think that things are starting to look like they're not so unrealistic to think it might happen in the next year and into 2022. I think we could be welcoming people again from from where you are and from around the world to run these races.

Kerry Newsome: Yeah, I think this week's been encouraging in the media that's come out that, you know, Vietnam is recognising that they do need to look at opportunities to open their doors to tourists, and now the vaccine is getting rolled out. I think, you know, vaccine passport holders and things. I think I'm crossing fingers that, yes, you know, end of the year, 21, 22. Hopefully we can welcome people back to Vietnam.

[00:35:30] So I've started this thing, David, where after the Lunar New Year, I decided to try and pick a word for the year to help me focus on everything I'm doing. So I'm going to tell you mine my word for the year, so that'll give you a couple of minutes to think about what yours would be. But mine is REVIVE So my aim for the year is to revive the best experiences of Vietnam and share them with everyone on this show. Because I think to talk about Vietnam in a way of, you know, of it being stuck in COVID. But it's never going to be stuck in covid forever. So, you know, anything I can do to revive the travel industry and tourism and put a positive spin on coming to Vietnam? That's what I'm about. So my words revive.

[00:36:26] Do you have a word for the year, the year of the buffalo?

David Lloyd: I think I would have two.

[00:36:38] Yeah. I mean, something key for us, really. And I try to instil in my team here is “resilience” really that you've got to be resilient at the moment here because, you can have everything set up and ready to roll that.

[00:36:50] We've had the recent race and that we had to postpone for a few months. And the key thing everyone in our team needs to be is they need to **be resilient** and be able to keep going. And also they need to be second, whether to be **optimistic**.

So like you say, things are going to open up here. And we've been extremely lucky in Vietnam in the last twelve months with the way the Covid situation has been handled.

It's been a few little waves, but they've always been resolved and they've been able to open up things again to have the domestic tourism in these races. So I think each time something happens, we need to be resilient and we need to be optimistic and remember that it always comes good there in Vietnam. It has done this has been three times now, four times. **So, yeah, optimism and resilience. I am sorry for cheating?**

Kerry Newsome: I like it. I like it. I'll take them. I'll take them. David, it's been great having you on the show. Thanks for sharing your experiences and everything about the series, really love to explore that further. I'll make sure for everyone listening that I put as many links in the episode notes so people can contact you directly to know more about it and get involved. Just just. Yes. Sincerely, just great to have you on the program.

[00:38:01] Thank you very much. And it's great to spread the word more and a real pleasure to be on.

Thank you for having us to help us spread that word further.

Kerry Newsome: OK, thanks, David.