

One of the pleasures in visiting North Vietnam is a trip to Halong Bay, one of Nature's marvels and can be enjoyed best by lazy boat or energetically with a kayak. The area is full of islands with fascinating limestone caves; wonderful stalagmites, stalactites and other rock formations.

However it is best to visit these in the morning before the tours arrive when the caves are crowded and one has to listen to the ridiculous commentaries by the guides that go something like this:

This one look like one finger  
This one look like two finger  
This one look like candle  
This one look like snake looking  
This one look like rope hanging from ceiling  
This one look like finger pointing to floor  
This one look like candle cooking finger  
This one look like snake looking at rope hanging from ceiling but he think it is lady snake,  
Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee...

You may ask at this point what kind of rock it is but be told that he doesn't know. It is too complicated a question.

But look, Sir, this one look like octopus eating noodles with chopsticks!

Around this time you will then get a garbled story of how some Chinese tourists on paddle boats got blown off course and got stuck on some disposable chopsticks that a party cadre lost overboard when he was bringing them to some ~~ignorant savages~~ ethnic minorities on the islands, which held back the process of *doi moi* for years.

And then it's back to the rocks:

This one look like monk on trampoline  
This one look like elephant doing karaoke  
This one look like fish riding a bicycle  
This one look like a bald chicken on water skis  
This one look like tourist saying "What! Where? I don't believe it!!"

You have been warned.