

# School Trip to Vietnam



On Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September the Yr10/11 students left for Vietnam at 3am! We arrived in Hanoi and went for a cyclo tour of the city and got to see all the sights. It is a beautiful city with an amazing history. In the afternoon we went for a walk around the city and ate local food in a side street. It was great for the kids to get a real taste and feel of Vietnam, by eating the food and watching the world go by. In the evening we watched a water puppet show at a local theatre.

The next day we set off at 7am for a guided tour of Hanoi, where we saw the Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh Square, the former royal palace and had a tour of where Ho Chi Minh lived. We saw his house, his study, his bedroom, his cars and the house on stilts where he passed away. Later on we went to the temple of literature and finally to the 'Peace Village'. This is one of many areas which was bombed and destroyed in the Vietnam War by the orange agent chemicals. The 'Peace Village' is a school and hospital run by volunteers, who teach and care for these third generation children, who are infected by the radiation poisoning because it got in their grandparents genes. This was a great experience for our students as they got to mix with the children and help them in their lessons. The Vietnamese students were so happy, it made their day to see us and other students. Jack even sung them a nursery rhyme, which although not the greatest tenor, he clearly made them laugh and smile. If you ever want to see the effects of war you should see this, because it is proof of the horrors of war as it will go on forever through the generations.

On Thursday we went to Halong Bay and we had a 4 hour cruise seeing all the beautiful sights and enjoyed a seafood lunch. It truly is one of the gems of Asia, if not the world. We then toured a cave and took in the sights.

On Friday we flew to Ho Chi Minh at 8am. On arrival we had a tour of the city, which is very French, due to France controlling Vietnam before 1941. We went to the War Museum, which is one of the most moving museums in the world. The pictures are very emotional as most of the photographers were called within minutes of taking many of the photos. They got to see weapons

and aircraft use during the war. The museum is very well done and tells the whole story from 1954 up until 1975. We then went to the former Presidential Palace, which marked the end of the Vietnam War, when the Vietcong stormed the palace and this finally forced the South to surrender and resulted in Vietnam reuniting. The Palace consists of 80 different rooms and they even had their own cinema.

On Saturday we went to the Mekong Delta, which is a remarkable sight, and we cruised the delta on many types of boats, including long tailed boats. We saw them make coconut candy and some got to put a cobra around their necks, something which I cannot even watch, let alone do! In the afternoon we saw a floating market and experienced how they live on the Mekong.

On Sunday we went to the Cu Chi Tunnels. These are an amazing network of tunnels which stretch 250km from Ho Chi Minh to Kamphuchea (Cambodia). Even today the best engineers cannot work out how they designed and made them. The Vietcong lived in the tunnels, where there were beds, kitchens, hospitals, bases, hiding tunnels and all their equipment. They are the main reason why the Vietcong won the Vietnam War. The Americans initially didn't know where they were and then when they did they could not cope with the terrain, weather and guerilla tactics. The Vietcong were brave men and women who were fighting for their lives, in what really is a remarkable achievement. We went down some tunnels and Tanya, Alyn, Mr Wrightson and myself made it all the way through. We also saw all the torture equipment, weapons and transport. Some students were able to fire AK47s and M60s and realized that war is not a game and in the wrong hands a gun is a weapon of mass destruction, many students were scared and horrified by the deafening noise.

On the last day we did some last minute shopping and then flew back to Bangkok at 6pm. I would like to thank Khun Kate and Mr Wrightson for all their efforts and hard work. Once again it was a memorable and unforgettable visit to Vietnam, where the students learnt an amazing amount about Vietnam's history and culture.

*Jason Holloway*