

# SOUTH EAST ASIA

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## THAILAND

### Bangkok



We arrived in Bangkok on 8<sup>th</sup> August catching the BTS Skytrain from the airport to a hostel in Siam, the centre of Bangkok where we stayed for 3 nights. We arrived late, and managed to find some tasty local street food. On the first day, we explored the markets and shops around Siam where it was very bustling. That evening, we headed to Pat Pong night market-an area full of tourists and interesting night life! The following day we spent exploring Bangkok's famous temples. We travelled on a local river boat and went to see Wat Pho (The Temple of the Reclining Buddha). It was full of beautiful architecture throughout, however the highlight had to be the impressive golden reclining Buddha. Its size was too big to capture on camera, but we had a good go!

Whilst at the temple, there was a group of school children who were having an English class. The teachers asked us if we would help out the children with their English since its our native language, and we were more than happy to help.



We then took a traditional tuk-tuk taxi to The Golden Mount, a temple where you had to climb to reach the main attraction, which gave us stunning views over the whole of Bangkok. We spent our last evening on Khao San Road, another popular tourist attraction which has plenty of weird and wonderful delicacies such as roasted scorpions and spiders!

### **Koh Tao-Koh Pha-Ngan-Koh Samui**

After Bangkok, we headed down to the South of Thailand to explore the islands. Our first stop was Koh Tao which had amazing beaches and sea life. We went on a snorkeling trip where we managed to find some baby sharks, as well as other impressive fish. In the evenings, we found some amazing street food stalls, and watched fire shows on the beach.



We then got a ferry to Koh Pha-Ngan. We were here for 3 days exploring what the island had to offer. On one day, we hired a jeep, venturing through local communities and discovering the islands most stunning coastline.



We then travelled to Koh Samui, the home of the Big Buddha. The island was a lot bigger and a lot more developed than the other two islands we visited, which meant the prices were certainly a lot higher. We were only here for a brief amount of time, but managed to visit the Fisherman's Village which had lovely restaurants.

Favourite Thai Food: Massaman Curry

Favourite Thai Word: สวัสดีครับ - sa-wùt dee kà (A very long way to say "Hello"!)

Favourite Thai location: Koh Tao

# Vietnam

## Ho Chi Minh City

Have you ever tried to cross a road in HCMC? It was one of the most bewildering experiences of my life so far. As you cross the road hundreds of motorbikes weave and dodge the pedestrians despite the zebra crossings. During our time in HCMC we visited the war museum and the Cu Chi Tunnels which were truly overwhelming experiences. Here we learnt about the war and the lasting effects it has had on the city. We also visited the Mekong Delta River where we saw how locals lived.



Some lived on boats making their livelihood from selling and buying fruit and vegetables. Others lived in small villages, which we were able to explore by bicycles, making coconut based foods as a living. We spent the rest of our time in Ho Chi Minh exploring the city and all it had to offer from Ben Thanh Market to Saigon Square.

## Phu Quoc Island

Phu Quoc is a small island off the south coast of Vietnam. Due to its location the island hasn't seen the same effects the mainland has of westernized development and therefore it still holds its local charm (not to mention some of the best sunsets in the world). The island's economy is built on the fishing industry, and local fishing boats are seen trailing up and down the shores throughout the day and evening. Here we spent most of our time wondering the beaches and enjoying the peaceful environment that Phu Quoc offers.



## Hoi An

During our time in Hoi An we stayed in a lovely small hotel about a 5 minute cycle away from the famous old town. The staff were extremely helpful in providing us with maps, bicycles and travel information to make sure we got the most out of our time in Hoi An. The first day consisted of exploring the beautiful old town - a UNESCO world heritage site consisting of 800 historical buildings. On the second day we attended a local cookery course. In the morning we caught a boat to local food markets to source ingredients. We then spent some time watching and learning how certain Vietnamese foods are made as well as trying them. A highlight was a local delicacy, silk worm salad, which was surprisingly nice! After an exciting morning it was finally time to cook some of the local dishes for ourselves such as; 'Mother in laws soup', BBQ chicken and lime leaves, Mango and Prawn Salad and Banh Xeo.



We mainly spent the evenings wandering around the old town enjoying all its beauty at night. The town is covered in colorful lanterns that light up the streets full of shops, stalls and restaurants.



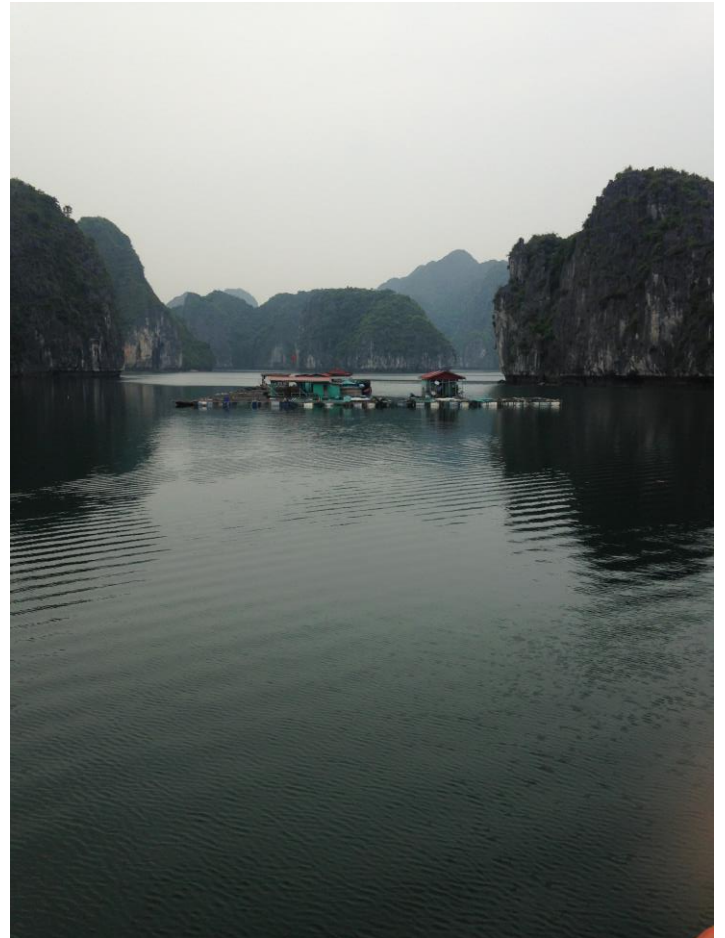
## Hanoi / Ha Long Bay

During our time in the capital city of Vietnam, Hanoi, we witnessed the festival of independence day. The streets were full of Vietnamese families celebrating their independence by eating and drinking in the streets whilst watching groups of performers. The city has a grand lake in the heart of the city with a pagoda situated in the middle connected by a bridge. The lake used to be home

to 1 of 3 Yangtze giant turtles believed to be alive in the world and it was thought that if you saw the turtle you would be given good luck. The turtle died earlier this year and a shrine of the giant turtle now exists on the pagoda.



After staying in Hanoi for 2 nights, we travelled to Ha Long Bay for 2 nights, which has recently become one of the new Seven Wonders of Nature. Ha Long translates to “where the dragon descends into the sea” due to the scattered islands which represent the dragons back moving in and out of the water. On the first night we stayed on our boat and spent the day kayaking, swimming and exploring caves. The second night, we took a smaller boat and headed to a private island where we were able to play sports or kayak around the area. It was a fantastic experience with breathtaking views.



Favourite Vietnamese food: Phở (Noodle beef soup)

Favourite Vietnamese word: chúa ơi (Oh My!)

Favorite Location: Hoi an Old Town (especially in the evening)

## Hong Kong

We came to Hong Kong for 5 nights to explore the fascinating and busy country. During our time here, we took the famous star ferry to visit the history museum on the Kowloon side of the city. We learnt all about Hong Kong from the pre historic age right through to the recent years, specifically 1997, when Hong Kong was handed back over to China. We also spent time wandering around the city centre witnessing the incredible architecture of the many sky rises, and contrasting this with the local stalls and food markets which are extremely basic. We then discovered a local temple, called Man Mo, hidden in the city centre where many locals would visit to pray. On our last day, we hiked up to the peak which offers a panoramic view of the whole city.



This life changing trip would not have been possible if it wasn't for the generosity of the Adventure Trust for Girls and therefore I would like to say a big thank you to all the trustees and everyone involved with the trust. Due to the experiences that I have had travelling through South East Asia, I have decided that I would love to teach English in Asia and therefore after university I will be looking at possible ways in which I am able to do this. Once again thank you!