

Lachlan Holden – Short Term Program to Vietnam at Can Tho University in 2008

G'day I'm Lachlan. I am currently completing my final year in my Bachelor of Science (Agronomy) degree at the Wagga Wagga CSU campus. During the June Holidays of 2009 I was part of a student group which travelled to Vietnam. Two lecturers Jason Condon & Alison Southwell accompanied us on the trip. The purpose of this trip was to investigate Vietnam's Agriculture which included rice and maize production, livestock and fisheries, rubber production, fruit and vegetable production, dairying, agricultural markets, research and extension. The trip would focus on the Agriculture in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam.

My main motivation to travel on this trip was to explore Agriculture and other parts of society in another country. I had never travelled over sea before this trip so naturally I was very excited but also nervous to go on this trip. There was much preparation required including passport application, vaccinations and gathering the money that was required to go on the trip.

The trip for our group began on the early hours of the 27th of June. It was extremely cold and many of us hadn't slept because of the excitement for the trip. We left Wagga on a bus and travelled to Sydney to catch the plane that would take us to Vietnam. Some in our group had never travelled on a plane before and were anxious to experience international flying. The trip was roughly 8-9 hours some of us slept on the trip while the rest enjoyed the complimentary 'beverages' that were supplied by the flights crew.

When we arrived in Ho Chi Minh City many of us were overwhelmed with the humidity and heat however we were amazed by the sight of our new surroundings. We travelled by bus from Ho Chi Minh City to Cần Thơ where we were to spend the good part of the week learning about Agriculture in Vietnam at the Cần Thơ. It was here during our classroom lessons and our field trips to the surrounding countryside when I learned of the very hospitable and friendly attitude of the Vietnamese people. On one occasion the group visited a Vietnamese rice farmer and his family. For me this was very interesting as I had grown up on an Australian rice farm and it fascinated me to compare the different methods to create the same produce. In our free time my group and I explored the city of Cần Thơ and experienced the grand nightlife it had to offer.

At the end of the first week we travelled back to Ho Chi Minh City by bus and then flew out to Phú Quốc island. Here we learnt about the fishing industry and saw a highly developed eco-farm that relied on a fertigation system. It was during these few days we also went snorkelling, fishing and spent large amount of time swimming.

The second week of the trip was focused more on History but still studied some elements of Agriculture. We travelled to Vũng Tàu and experienced drinking tinnies in the grand hotel, met Australian Vietnam war veterans and travelled to the site of the battle of Long Tan. For me this was the most rewarding and most memorable part of the trip. We also visited the Củ Chi tunnel complex during our final days this was very interesting. The tunnels were very vast and the history of the area was overwhelming. Another memorable part of the trip. When it came to the end of the trip many of us did not want to leave Vietnam. However many of us were keen to tell family and friends back home about our experiences.

So where the bloody hell was I in 2009? I was in a beautiful unique country that is rich in culture and History with a bunch of friends that I will have forever. This trip brought me a new found confidence in travel and I do

believe I have caught the so called 'travel bug'. I have also learnt how fortunate westerners are in some aspects and how we are poor in others. Another positive aspect of this trip is that it made the bond for my classmates & I even stronger and we learnt more about each other in the two week than we ever had. The trip would not have been possible without the time and effort put in by the accompanying lecturers Jason Condon & Alison Southwell.