

Our Visit to Viet Nam

This past August my mom and I went on a homeland tour back to my birth country Vietnam, where I was able to immerse myself in the rich culture of this beautiful country. We went with an amazing group of people who made this experience extra special. Barbara Graffeo led our expedition with five of us who were born in Viet Nam and our families. There were about 15 to 17 people all together.

Our first day there we did some great sight seeing of Hanoi, led by our lifesaving tour guide, Mr. Dung. He was so informative and made our touring fun by joking and laughing, so he became quickly an important part of our group. It was quite an experience trying to go across the heavily traveled streets of Hanoi our first day. Mr. Dung crossed us as a group and would have to occasionally run back for one or two of our fearful group members who didn't make it across! Among many sights those days, we visited Ho Chi Minh's Home and Museum and learned that he was very well loved by the people of Viet Nam.

One of the highlights of this trip for me was going to the Orphanage in Vinh Phuc. It was a great experience teaching these very receptive kids, English. They were very smart and eager to learn. We showed them pictures and sounded out words phonetically so they would be able to imitate the sounds. I asked them each time what the Vietnamese words were, so they taught me, also. After our English/Vietnamese lessons, some of the teens asked me if I wanted to play soccer. It seems as though girls in Viet Nam do not play sports, they just giggled and said 'no' when we asked them to join us. So the game consisted of Caitlin, Victoria and me with the teen boys. I had a great time playing soccer with them even though the temperature had to be higher than 100 degrees! We all laughed a lot and we felt this sport and our laughter transcended the language barrier.

I cannot wait to go back for another visit sometime. I would like to return to see many areas of Vietnam both north of Hanoi and some of the southern parts that we were not able to visit in our short 10 day stay. I'm going to miss seeing the beautiful lush rice patties, the hardworking farmers, the night street markets and all the crazy motorcycles whizzing by us.

By Natalie Rebecca Gray
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