

HELLO FROM VIETNAM!



May 2014

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Phu Quoc Island



Right from the start we had joked with one of the other volunteers, Indra Bout (Netherlands), to go to the island because it has the reputation of being one of the most beautiful places in Vietnam - a pure paradise! (We had also heard rumors that Brad Pitt might have a luxury villa on the island, which also drew us a little too it). Now we had the chance to make the dream turn into a reality!!

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Phu Quoc Island

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We were picked up by a taxi at 3:30am. We were so tired and took turns to sleep. We were probably some of the first who get to the airport as it was completely deserted and the doors towards the terminal were locked. One and a half hours later we could finally go on board and the flight was about two hours.

At 8am we arrived in Phu Quoc, and as early as it was in the morning, the heat was already baking. We hailed a taxi to the hotel. Our hotel, Arcadia Phu Quoc Resort, was just as we had imagined - pure luxury!

We were allowed to put our luggage in the reception (we could on-check in later), so that we could jump into our bikinis and go lay down on the beach. What a beach! It was like something out of a movie, the blue water, white sand and palm trees were as far as the eye could see!



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Phu Quoc Island

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All the day was spent on the beach and in the evening we went sightseeing in the largest parts of the city on the island of Duong Dong. Here, we saw the night market where you could buy all kinds of fish that swam around in small aquariums and also pearls!

We walked around town and finally found a restaurant where we were the only customers, but the food was good. The restaurant is located right down in the harbor, so we had a lovely view!



We spent most of the holiday on the beach (which also resulted in the fact that we were well burnt on the first day already - the sun is incredibly strong on the island!) We were on a tour on Monday, and went on a cruise down to the southern tip of the island. We were picked up at the hotel in the morning and went out to a pearl farm. The trip included fishing (only Indra caught a minor accident with one mini fish, which was put out again) and snorkeling. After fishing we snorkelled for the first time, it was a really good experience, we've really never seen anything like



it. It was incredibly beautiful with lot of different fish, corals and other invertebrates. The two hours we snorkeled went very quickly. We found it so wonderful and liberating to just float around in the turquoise blue water and marine life.



Then we headed to Sao Beach, which was said to be the most beautiful of the whole island. It really is - even more beautiful than the private beach at our hotel: whiter sand, clearer and warmer water! Too bad we had only an hour at the beach; we felt we could have been there all day.

Phu Quoc Island

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On the last day we went to Coconut prison (which is one of the only cultural sights of the island). It was used during the Vietnam War by the Americans / South Vietnamese, to keep the North Vietnamese captured. The prisoners had extremely poor living conditions and were subjected to hard torture. The torture methods were very cruel and inventive. It's almost one of the best museums we have visited so far.



We flew back to Hanoi on Wednesday morning and were home around 12 pm. When we arrived in Hanoi and looked up at the grey smog, we already missed Phu Quoc's blue skies and warm weather! It has been a fantastic vacation in paradise and we could have been there forever!



Marie Jakobsen and Elisabeth Klostergaard, Denmark, Care volunteers

Insight into a volunteer's perspective:

An interview with Jennifer Roberts: how an International Development volunteer project in a developing country can benefit future job applications and roles

The idea of working for an International development volunteer project in Vietnam came to Jennifer Roberts (Australia) as a supporting move in line with her passion and plan to work in the International Relations field. As a current master's student majoring in International Relations at Griffith University in Brisbane, Jennifer applied for Projects Abroad's volunteer mission and got accepted to work for two months in a local NGO in Vietnam – a vibrant developing country.



Hi Jennifer, can you say something about the project you have been working on?

I worked in Human Resources, improving the policy and procedures surrounding volunteer workers at SCDI (a leading Vietnamese NGO supporting the empowerment of and advocate for the marginalized communities including those vulnerable to HIV). I also created a Capacity Building proposal and submitted suggestions for approaching businesses for part of the NGO's sponsorship. My office was located in Human Resources. I began with working to redesign the website, and worked with Vuong to present our ideas to the Board of Directors. After discussions with my supervisor about the requirements of the HR department, we agreed on new procedures which should be implemented for volunteers. I created the forms required, including Volunteer Feedback, Project Handover, Work plan and Volunteer Guideline Manual.

Why do you think an organization like SCDI needs help from volunteers?

I think SCDI relies on volunteers frequently as it has grown quickly and has many opportunities to develop in all departments and projects. SCDI values the ideas of its volunteers, because they come from a variety of backgrounds, and bring new expertise to the NGO.

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Insight into a volunteer's perspective:

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Is it easy to adapt to the workplace culture of your placement?

It was easy for me to adapt because the staff here are very welcoming and friendly. They are happy to help and explain whenever I have questions. I have also travelled in Asia before, so I did not experience a very noticeable culture shock!

What have you learnt since you worked for this volunteer project?

I have learned about the difficulties and achievements experienced by NGOs in developing countries, which are very different to my own. I understand much better the position they must start from and how few resources they often have to work with.

What is the biggest difficulty/obstacle you've had to overcome or accept?

The Vietnamese working style lacks formal reporting procedures, which can easily affect productivity. They are much more relaxed than previous places I have worked in, which is nice, but frustrating when you are used to receiving feedback and structured work plans.

The other issue is language, as only a few people could speak English. Much of the work here is contextually based, so without basic knowledge it was difficult to sometimes know the next step.



In which way do you think that your volunteer time and working effort has an effect and a contribution to the project and the local community?

I believe my contributions to SCDI may take a little time to be fully realised, however I am certain that as they develop further, many of my reports and forms will be utilised regularly and simplify processes in the future. I also believe that future volunteers here will have a much more structured experience and ability to navigate SCDI and Vietnam better.

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Insight into a volunteer's perspective:

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How useful is this work experience for your future? Do you think it has changed your viewpoint in life?

I believe my experience in the NGO is very valuable, and it will be useful in future job applications and roles. I also believe that the understanding you gain from living overseas is very different to simply thinking about how things might be for others, especially in another culture. Living in Hanoi has changed how I view the role of civil society in Vietnam.

What would your advice be for future volunteers?

I would recommend that future volunteers should always ask for more information and do not be afraid to talk to the Vietnamese people you work with. They may not have the resources that you are used to in your home country, so be open minded, accepting and be resourceful. Don't stress!

What do you love about Vietnam?

I love almost everything I have experienced in Vietnam. The people, food and passion of the staff at SCDI are truly amazing. I will definitely come back to see more, as there is too much that I missed in only two months of volunteering!



Jennifer participated in a Dirty Day organized by Projects Abroad Vietnam: helping orphaned children plant flowers to renovate the garden of the shelter.

20 ways for a Projects Abroad volunteer to have an interesting weekend in Hanoi

(continued from April Newsletter)

11. Discover a new local street junk food: Okay, food again, the reason Hanoi is the heaven of delicious street food! If food hygiene is not a big concern you have when travelling, then tasting the local food specialties offered everywhere by the street vendors is never a wrong choice. Deep-fried pillow puffs, Vietnamese food salad, sugarcane juice, icy lemon tea, egg coffee, local ice cream, sticky rice and the list goes on!



Icy fresh sugarcane juice - one of the best summer drinks!

12. Wake up early and join a morning taichi or yoga group at lakes in Hanoi: We know just a small part of this world are morning people, but discovering and being a part of the early morning life pace of Hanoi might just be worth all the waking efforts! Streets are fresh, clean and empty; morning activities are extra interesting: group morning physical exercise, yoga, jogging, newspaper reading on the bench, early morning markets and flower markets, street side breakfasts... Would you want us to name more or do you prefer to discover it yourself? ;)

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20 ways for a Projects Abroad volunteer to have an interesting weekend in Hanoi

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13. Try some local spa and massage service by blind people: Local spa and massage service is available widely in the Old Quarter at a really affordable price. If you pine for something more special, then try the massage service offered by the blind people at Omamori Spa (No. 102 B1 Alley 5 Huynh Thuc Khang st. and Just Massage (237 Au Co st.)

14. Wake up early (3am) to join the early flower market in Nghi Tam – Westlake: This traditional flower market opens every day from 2am until 7am in the Westlake district of Hanoi. There are hundreds of booths selling freshly-picked flowers here. The market attracts both buyers and visitors.



15. Try swan peddle boats on Westlake: On a weekend day of nice weather, enrich your Hanoi memory pocket by stepping (yes, stepping, not jumping) on a cute peddle boat in the shape of a swan and enjoy yourself in the cool natural vibe of one of the nicest lakes of Hanoi – the West lake.

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20 ways for a Projects Abroad volunteer to have an interesting weekend in Hanoi

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16. Organic weekend market: This small and nice market in Westlake area (ASVELIS yard, at 4,67/12 Lane 67 To Ngoc Van, Tay Ho) opens only from 8am to 12:30pm on Saturday and Sunday morning. Here you can find clothes, books, craft products, organic groceries, flowers and unique decorating stuffs for your house. To find the market is a little bit difficult if you are foreign to this part of the city, yet a map can be found here: <http://tnhvietnam.xemzi.com/en/event/show/6239/date/2014-04-26>



17. Study some new Vietnamese phrases and words: One or two hours every weekend spent on studying the local language can make your life in Hanoi a little bit easier and more interesting. Self-study with books and audio is totally feasible, and another exciting way is to approach a local student at Hoan Kiem Lake and exchange communication with him/her. The latter way sounds fun, doesn't it?

18. Reflect on the past week and plan a new activity for your placement:

Put a calm note in your weekend experience by reflecting on what you did, observed and learnt in the last seven days by writing a journal and brainstorming new volunteer ideas for the coming week. Projects Abroad and its placements always welcome new ideas and initiatives! Feel free to send us a message or drop by the office to chat about the new plan you want to implement for your project; we are more than happy to listen to you and support you to realize it.

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20 ways for a Projects Abroad volunteer to have an interesting weekend in Hanoi

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19. Go to a local outdoor market and test your Vietnamese language and bargain skills: You might already have known how many outdoor local markets there are in Hanoi. There are so many of them located everywhere in this city and we believe they are the best place that reflect the culture and style of local people. Not very confident in your language and bargaining skills? All we can say is practice makes perfect! Throw yourself into the vibrant environment of these markets and test your ability to interact with local people. You will surprise us one day, believe so!



Volunteers went to a local market to buy food and cook for people in an orphanage in Hanoi - April 2013's Community Outreach event

20. Learn something new about Vietnam culture and history: You are in a country of rich culture and history. Be curious, observe and explore! Keep a note of what you have learnt and of what you find strange and interesting (there are millions of them, we know). Our local people are happy to answer your questions. Knowledge and wisdom can always be enriched by travelling – in that way.

Duong Pham, Communications Officer

Photo Review: Summer Camp for orphaned children



What's On: June 2014 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Megan and Henry arrive	2	3	4 Social Dinner	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Mathieu , Laura and Rachel arrive	13	14
15 Kimberly and Stephanie arrive	16	17	18	19	20 Henry's birthday	21 Oliver arrives Monthly Outreach
22	23	24 Cecilie, Samantha and Sophie arrive	25 Jarrah arrives	26 Cultural Workshop	27	28 Bethany, Sigrid and Anne arrive
29	30 Alise arrives					

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June 4—Social Dinner: A great chance to be introduced to some delicious food specialty of Vietnam while getting to know other fellow volunteers.

June 21— Monthly Outreach: the most expected event of the month.
More information to come!

June 26 - Cultural Workshop: games and activities to get a deeper insight into Vietnamese culture. Shouldn't miss!!



Care volunteer Henriette Gesbert (France) takes care of an orphaned baby at her placement.



Lovely moment of care volunteer Bronwyn de Mare (South Africa) with a blind orphaned baby at Bo De shelter!



Medical volunteer Julia van Steenhoven totally loved her volunteer experience in Vietnam, where she had the chance to get a real understanding of the medical setting and culture!



Just a fond moment of physiotherapy volunteer Christina Aaling (Denmark) and a local child with disabilities :)



French teaching volunteer Maeva Carreira (Canada) during a lesson at her placement.

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Projects Abroad is the leading global organizer of overseas voluntary work placements. Our wide range of projects, including Teaching, Care, Conservation & Environment, Medicine & Healthcare, Sports, Culture & Community projects and Journalism, are designed specifically for the needs of the communities in which we work, whilst giving our volunteers the very best experience of volunteering abroad.

Based in Hanoi, Vietnam, volunteers can work on a variety of projects, including care work with disabled and orphaned children, physical therapy at local hospitals, and teaching either English or French in both primary and secondary schools. The latest projects to be opened is Nursing and Medical—Surgery projects. The interesting 2-week-specials program for young volunteers aged 16-19 is still open for applications! If you are interested in volunteering in Vietnam with Projects Abroad then please log on to www.projects-abroad.net for more information.

Follow us on [Instagram](#) for the inspiring and thought-provoking photos and stories: [Projectsabroad_Vietnam](#) :)



Orphaned children in their play time at a center of Social Work—placement for Projects Abroad's care and 2-Weeks-Special volunteers. How cute!