

Reach Out: Hello, Vietnam!

Estimated Cost: \$1600-1800

Vietnam is a country of rich culture whose history has been overshadowed by its years of conflict. Since the controversial war, the people of Vietnam have pushed forward, retaining much of their old traditions while also bringing themselves up to speed with the rest of the world. The present Viet Nam is a striking juxtaposition of the old agrarian ways of the countryside and the booming economies that define the major cities. Presently, Vietnam boasts one of the fastest growing economies in Asia. Despite its open borders and markets, Vietnam still remains plagued by several issues in public health, human rights, and social development. Despite such issues, the Vietnamese people are optimistic in their approach to life and are determined to enhance their lives and country.

Thousands of tourists travel to Viet Nam every year to see the ancient ruins of the Champa Kingdom, remark at the different cultural influences on Vietnamese architecture, relax at Viet Nam's numerous beaches, or to take part in Sai Gon's bustling night life. Few, however, witness the story of Viet Nam untold by history books, travel guides, and tour guides. The goal of **Reach Out: Hello, Vietnam!** is to provide an introduction to the prevalent issues in Vietnam by personal interactions, establishing friendships with locals, and cross-cultural exchange.

Reach Out Vietnam will traverse North, Central, and South Vietnam, beginning in Saigon and ending in the capitol city of Hanoi. By spending a week in Saigon, students will be able to immerse themselves in the local culture and form personal relationships with the city itself. Also, before heading to Ha Noi, students will enjoy a short excursion to Hoi An, one of Vietnam's most picturesque and charming vacation spots. From volunteering at **La Maison Chance**, a shelter and vocational training center for orphans and physically disabled adults; to distributing Remedy medical supplies to rural clinics; to learning directly from UN and WHO contacts about Vietnam as a developing country, students selected for this trip will have hands-on experiences with tangible results, namely the ability to communicate in a different cultural context and a deeper understanding of the characteristics of modern Vietnam.

As we will explore through multiple "cultural immersion" sessions, the Vietnamese are not only very receptive of foreigners, but are also very willing to share their own culture with others. Whether it is through our service projects or through sharing some good food in a local café, creating bonds with locals will be instrumental to our learning experience. Therefore, Reach Out Vietnam will strive not only to showcase how students can make a difference through their involvement with organizations working in the field, but also merely through being culturally aware and involved. We hope that the social networks that we create during our time in the country will allow students to return to this wonderfully diverse and rapidly modernizing country!

Tentative Itinerary

Sunday, March 7-Monday, March 8: Depart from NYC, arrive in Saigon
Tuesday, March 9- Saturday, March 13: Work at La Maison Chance: spend days interacting with the children at the shelter, and evenings getting acquainted with the city (sightsee, experience local culture, also visit rural clinic to distribute REMEDY medical supplies).
Sunday, March 14-Monday, March 15: Depart Saigon for Hoi An: relax, sightsee, visit beach, get acquainted with the village
Tuesday, March 16: Fly to Hanoi, sight-see in the evening
Wednesday, March 17- Thursday, March 18: Work with UN and WHO (contacts made through Yale World Fellows program): get scope of the UN pilot project “One UN Initiative” in Vietnam; learn about public health in Vietnam (HIV/AIDS policy and public perception in VN)
Friday, March 19- Saturday, March 20: Fly home

For more information about the host organization, La Maison Chance, visit their website at <http://www.maison-chance.org/alpha/index.php>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email quynh.do@yale.edu or kimberly.ton@yale.edu