

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ASIA STUDY TOUR PARTICIPANTS

Climate

You will be in Asia for three weeks and the weather can vary from being hot and humid during the day to being pleasantly cool during the evenings. Sunburn and sunstroke are always a possibility so bring a broad brimmed hat and plenty of sunscreen lotion.

Accommodation

You will be staying in tourist class hotels (usually three star or better). Most have been selected by previous participants as being good value for money. You will be sharing rooms with other students, including Australians who are participating in the Study Tour program.

Laundry

You should either plan to wash your own clothes from time to time so laundry detergent would be useful or alternatively plan to pay for it at the hotels.

Insurance

Check to see whether your insurance policy covers you against personal liability, death, accident, sickness, theft, loss, and evacuation (you are required to have this as a Condition of Touring).

Medical Matters

While all the care will be taken to ensure that only safe water and food are consumed, sometimes participants can suffer digestive disturbances in reaction to the change of climate and diet. Please seek advice from your university or family doctor about what preventive and palliative measures might be advisable to take with you. You should also consider taking protective measures against Malaria before and during the duration of the program.

Spending money

Bring a bank debit card that can be used to withdraw cash at an international ATM, and/or US\$500 in Traveller Cheques, remembering that you will be charged a commission each time you change currencies.

Communications

Please advise your family that in an emergency they should contact Curtin's office in Perth:

CALLING FROM OVERSEAS

Phone: +618 9266 3434
Fax: +618 9266 3847
Cell: +614 1993 8707

CALLING FROM AUSTRALIA

Phone: 08 9266 3434
Fax: 08 9266 3847
Mobile: 041 993 8707

What to Bring

You will be travelling for much of the time so you should travel light - ***no more than one standard suitcase*** for checking at the airport, ***and one overnight cabin bag***. Suitcases on rollers are often more convenient for travel.

Check-List

You will need a range of informal and formal clothing that is suitable for temperatures ranging from 5° to 40°C. A degree of formality in dress will be required for business meetings and also because we are dressing for other cultures. For males this means long pants, dress shirt (bring at least two), tie, and jacket; for females, an appropriate “modest” dress which covers some of the arms and legs. Informal clothes (eg. tank tops, shorts) can be worn in tourist areas.

PLUS

- Sturdy cotton long trousers
- Sturdy cotton long sleeved shirts
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Raincoat (a hip length coat is most suitable)
- Hat
- Sunscreen lotion (Essential)
- Insect repellent
- Bath towels (2)
- Needle and Thread (sewing kit)
- Camera for taking photos for your Photo Essay requirement
- Swimsuit
- Notebooks & pencils
- Aspirin and anti-diarrhoeal medication
- Flashlight or torch
- Alarm clock

ADVICE FROM PAST PARTICIPANTS

The Asia Study Tour of 2004 was a fascinating, eye-opening, memorable, fun, and exciting experience for me. On this study tour, you will probably visit the following countries: Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. When you depart from Los Angeles in the evening in the middle of January, you will stop at Taipei, Taiwan's Chiang-Kai Shek International Airport for about an hour layover before going on to Kuala Lumpur where you will be met by Dr. Ian Fairnie, Director of the SMU-In-Australia program, his staff, and some other Australian students from Curtin University.

Before you leave, please take the time to read the book required for this tour: *Thunder from the East: A Rising Asia*. This book will help the first time traveler understand the cultures of Southeast Asia. You will be going on tours of multinational companies, meetings with the Australian embassies of the respective countries you visit, host families of Curtin and non-Curtin Asian and non-Asian alumni, museums, temples, beaches, and parks.

The study tour was very helpful to me in understanding the cultures that makeup Southeast Asia. Some advice that I would give to future students participating on this tour is to venture out and explore the different cities that you will visit. Most of the Southeast Asian countries visited are safe to walk around at night either by yourself, or with a group. I would also recommend them to read the Asian Study Tour manual written by Dr. Fairnie's office at Curtin University before you come or either in Melaka, Malaysia. It has lots of wonderful and helpful information.

I would recommend that you to take many different photographs of the cities that you visit in Southeast Asia for their photo essay, keep a journal of their experiences on the trip, drink lots of bottled water, and bring sunscreen. The temperature over there is mostly hot and humid all year round except in Hanoi which was cold and wet. Don't be surprised if Asians do not stand in line, get up from the airplane before it stops, bargain with you in the markets, and if you see possibly unhygienic food practices in the open air markets and restaurants that you eat at. Be prepared to see weird kind of foods and fruits selling in the markets. I would tell any future tour participants to be extremely respectful of the cultures in the countries being visited.

Be prepared to adapt to foreign countries and cultures quickly, be flexible, keep an open mind, be patient, and do not be the ugly "American" that foreigners stereotype us as. Try the foods of the country being visited, speak a little of the country's language, and be willing to learn some of the country's customs either before you leave or while you are in the country being visited. I had a great time and enjoyed the study tour. If I had to redo it again, I would be back in the Asia-Pacific Rim in a flash of a heartbeat.

Before arriving in Asia, put some serious thought towards the photo essay and the paper. Once you arrive, the new experience will be quite overwhelming. Not only will you be getting to know your classmates and the staff members, but you'll be in a totally new and fascinating culture. Time flies while you're there, and it's not very effective to figure out a topic for both assignments by the middle or end of the tour. You need to have ideas for topics in mind to look out for specific information and details while you're in Asia. Maybe it would be best to do a little research before leaving the States. You can make a final decision once you're in Asia, but definitely don't take the seriousness of the assignments for granted.

One of the major regrets I had about the tour was not enough mental preparation. I would like to have started thinking about and researching themes for the study tour paper and the photo essay. The photo essay was particularly challenging to me. I suggest taking most of your pictures in the first location. That way, as you progress through the tour and start to solidify a theme, you will have interesting pictures from your starting point to work with. The key with the pictures is detail. Don't take typical tourist photos. Venture out and look beyond the obvious. Take pictures of the interesting cab driver you met or the guy you asked for directions. Maybe there is an advertisement in a store window that is very telling of the culture. Always keep the big picture in mind as you photograph the little things.

Another important thing to remember is attire. You might get very confused as to what is appropriate. The key is to always have two pairs of shoes: one formal and one comfortable, and even an all-in-one pair. Don't be afraid of short sleeves and shorts but have a shirt to cover up with just in case. And bring a hand fan for when it's stale and hot!

You will be spending a lot of time with the people in your tour group. Make the most of it and get to know them. Try to avoid being exclusive to one group of people. Spend different nights with different people in different cities. Your view of each place can be clouded by the people that you are with. Spending your time with the same people can give you a skewed view of the place. Take chances and try new things. Experience the cuisine even though it might look exotic and scary. Spread out from the street that the hotel is located on. And keep your eyes open. Sometimes the major issues you will discuss about Asia will be evidenced in very subtle ways.