

ICEP Vietnam 2011



Daily Report

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DAILY REPORT

Saturday, July 2nd - Arrival at Chimney Corners Camp

ICEP Vietnam started with an early-morning arrival at the Chimney barn. Participants, families and leaders had a chance to mingle and introduce themselves before Jim and Alysa gave last-minute details and announcements about the trip. After everyone's families had left, the group played several icebreakers before moving into their lodging at Chimney. The group enjoyed an action packed afternoon complete with a swim test, low ropes and scenarios before dinner. The night ended with a kickball game against ICEP Peru and the group's first cabin chat.

Cabin Chat Question: **Why are you on this trip?**

Sunday, July 3rd - Orientation at Chimney Corners Camp

The second day of orientation started with a late wake-up and breakfast, which was appreciated by all. The group spent the morning inside the dining hall because of heavy rain. Everyone shared information that they had researched on various aspects of Vietnam. The group also brainstormed different games that they could teach to the young kids in Vietnam. After lunch, the group spent time in the library reflecting on their personal goals for the trip and talking about the way they wanted to represent themselves in Vietnam. After dinner and chapel, the group took on the task of packing, cleaning and staying awake until the bus arrived the next day at 3 a.m.

Cabin Chat Question: **What song best describes your state of mind right now?**

Monday, July 4th - Depart for Vietnam

The group made their way to the Chimney dining hall at 2:20 a.m. for a late-night cereal snack before boarding the bus to JFK airport at 3 a.m. The group survived the 16-hour flight to Hong Kong with the help of personal TV's at each seat, surprisingly good airplane food and each other's company. In Hong Kong, the group enjoyed eating a Chinese food snack in China, but was really looking forward to their final destination: Vietnam.

Tuesday, July 5th - Arrival in Ho Chi Minh City

Twenty-seven hours after leaving camp, the group arrived in Ho Chi Minh City and was greeted at the airport by two of their YMCA Vietnam partners, Toan and Anh. The group had a light dinner at Pho 24 before heading to the hotel so they could have an early night and be refreshed for their first full day in Vietnam.

Wednesday, July 6th - Orientation at YMCA Vietnam

After a good night of sleep for most participants, the group met for an early breakfast at the hotel before taking two hours to explore the city surrounding the hotel. The group was in awe as they experienced their first true taste of Vietnam. Crossing the street proved to be a daring activity, but everyone managed to survive. At 10 a.m., the group boarded their bus to travel to the Vietnam YMCA. At the YMCA, the group had an orientation and welcome ceremony with Mr. Luu and other members of the YMCA. A fresh lunch was prepared for the group complete with seven dishes and fresh fruit for dessert. After lunch, the group enjoyed a much needed language lesson and some karaoke before heading back to the hotel. Dinner was served family style and the group had an early chat and bed time, in an effort to be completely adjusted to the time.

Cabin Chat Question: **What do you hope to gain from this trip?**

Thursday, July 7th - Homestays

The group woke-up early and packed before having a pho breakfast at the hotel. Some of the more adventurous members of the group tried the very strong Vietnamese coffee for the first time, and most of them enjoyed it. After moving to their new hotel, the group was divided into four smaller groups and they departed with their homestay hosts for the day. Participants enjoyed a full day with their host families cooking, shopping and sharing each other's cultures. The group met back up at the hotel in the evening for chat and another early night.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you were a Disney character, which one would you be?**

Friday, July 8th - Visit to Le Dinh Chinh Primary School

On the group's third morning, everyone finally woke up feeling fully rested from a full night of sleep. The group spent the day at the primary school with more than 100 young school children. Songs were shared by both the ICEP group and students at the school. The group played games with the kids in the morning before learning about the Vietnamese education system and giving their own presentation on the school systems in America. After the presentations, the group had a delicious lunch prepared by teachers at the school. In the afternoon, the group split into three smaller groups and spent several hours teaching the kids American playground games and a little bit of English. The day ended with dinner out at a restaurant before heading back to the hotel.

The group, tired from all the activities in the sun, enjoyed ice cream before cabin chat and bed.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you could go back to the school for one day, what lesson would you teach the kids?**

Saturday, July 9th - Travel to Mekong Delta and Overnight at Homestay

Excited for a new adventure, the group woke up early and hopped on the bus for a two-hour ride to the Mekong Delta city of My Tho. In My Tho, the group boarded a small boat for a day on the river. The group visited a coconut candy factory, tasted honey tea and took pictures with a python on Unicorn Island. Lunch was outside on Phoenix Island, another island in the delta, and dessert was fresh fruit. On the boat ride to the homestay, participants enjoyed cutting open their own coconuts and enjoying the juice. The homestay was a 15-minute walk from where the boat dropped the group off, and the group was pleasantly surprised to find the homestay located in a cool and shaded area of the island. There was a large garden with many fruits and vegetables that the group enjoyed exploring. Participants slept on beds in open air rooms with mosquito nets. The group spent the afternoon relaxing, touring the gardens and playing games. Another delicious meal was enjoyed outside by all. After dinner, the group enjoyed a "Girl's Night Out" and a "Guy's Night Out," where each group went into town separately and got ice cream. The group happily went to bed to the sound of nature instead of city sounds, for the first time in week.

Cabin Chat Question: **What do you believe is more important: logic or your gut feeling?**

Sunday, July 10th - Fishing on Unicorn Island

Waking up in the Mekong Delta was a great start to the day. Everyone was refreshed and enjoyed a breakfast of homemade pineapple jam, bread, eggs and delicious fried bananas. After the group said goodbye to Cuc, the homestay owner, the group hopped back on the boat to head south on the island to fish with local people. At the fishing spot, the group donned traditional fishing clothes and began to drain the canal. The group divided into two teams to compete and see who could catch the most fish. Everyone enjoyed running through the mud and diving at the

fish. In total, the group caught more than twelve fish before it started to rain. The local fisherman cooked the fish for the group and lunch was enjoyed outside. After resting in the hammocks on the island, the group headed to Ben Tre and checked into the hotel. After some much needed showering, the group explored the markets and stores in Ben Tre. A lavish dinner at the hotel ended with a birthday celebration for one participant.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you could have one image or symbol projected onto a screen for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

Monday, July 11th - Service at Luong Hoa Primary School

The group had an early breakfast at the hotel before leaving the city for Khanh Thanh Tan Commune. When the bus could go no further on the narrow roads, the group walked the final two kilometers to the primary school. One group worked on sanding and priming a new building to be painted, while another group taught English and played games with the children at the school. The teachers at the school prepared a lunch and the group enjoyed a rest after the large meal. The group played soccer in the courtyard while they waited for the kids to return from lunch. The two groups switched jobs and worked through a rainstorm for the rest of the afternoon. After the long day of service, the group walked back to the bus and headed to the hotel. After dinner, several group members ventured to a nearby pagoda to explore, while others checked e-mails and called home. Cabin Chat Question: **Who or what do you idolize?**

Tuesday, July 12th - Service at Luong Hoa Primary School

Another early breakfast energized the group for a second day of service. More students were at the school than the day before, and the classrooms were ready to be painted. The morning and afternoon were filled with teaching, priming and painting. The second day with the children went much smoother and the group was able to teach vocabulary that spanned from animals to clothes, to weather and directions. A midday rest rejuvenated the group and they worked through another afternoon rainstorm. That night, the group went out to dinner. Before heading back to the hotel, the group stopped at a supermarket for some snacks and American comfort food—peanut butter and jelly!

Cabin Chat Question: **What does money mean to you?**

Wednesday, July 13th - Final Day of Service at Luong Hoa Primary School

The group had breakfast at the hotel before leaving for their final day of service at Luong Hoa Primary School. The two groups worked diligently to finish painting the inside and outside of the school's new nursery. In an effort to fully complete the project, the group resumed work right after lunch, instead of resting. In the afternoon, half of the group went back to teaching while the others finished up the nursery. The group that was teaching helped facilitate a clean-up with the kids of their classrooms before saying goodbye to them for the day. When the group left, the school had a newly painted nursery and the kids had many new words and games to play and teach each other. The day ended with dinner at the hotel and chat.

Cabin Chat Question: **Describe the person to the right of you as an animal.**

Thursday, July 14th - Homestays and Completion Ceremony

After breakfast at the hotel, the group left for a morning and afternoon with local families. The three different groups enjoyed lunch, fresh fruit and talking to the families. After three hard days of service, many participants were exhausted and enjoyed a quick rest at their homestay after

lunch. The whole group met back at the Luong Hoa Primary School in the afternoon to attend the school's graduation and thank-you ceremony. Many speeches were given by local educators, business people, students and one ICEP participant. The group presented a gift to the school and was given thank-you presents from the school principal. Despite ominous looking clouds, the group had dinner outside with many locals and a group of Ho Chi Minh City University students who had come down to volunteer at the same school after the ICEP group. The weather held up, and after dinner the group enjoyed performances by the University students and a massive bonfire. The night involved lots of dancing and music. The group left the school in very high spirits. The group arrived at the hotel later than usually and had a quick chat before bed.

Cabin Chat Question: **What lesson do you think you left with the kids this week?**

Friday, July 15th - Travel to Cao Lanh City

After a much needed and deserved sleep-in, the group departed for Cao Lanh city in the Dong Thap Province. The group spent two hours on the bus before stopping for lunch at a rest stop. After lunch, the group drove for one more hour before arriving at their new hotel. Eager to stretch their legs, the group enjoyed a free afternoon wandering around the city center area. Errands for the afternoon included buying stamps and SIM cards and visiting the grocery store. The group enjoyed a late dinner at the hotel.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is your favorite touch, taste, smell, sight and sound?**

Saturday, July 16th - Boat Tour in Mekong Delta

The group left the hotel at 9am for a day on the river. A large boat took the group down the river for an hour before dropping everyone off at the Gao Giang eco-tour. The group watched a video about the local wildlife and plant life before having lunch. After lunch, the group moved to a shaded dock where group members had the option of fishing or napping in hammocks. Feeling rested, but not successful on the fishing front, the group boarded smaller boats to view the wildlife on the river and the many birds along the side of the river. After the tour, the group got back on the large boat to head back to the bus exhausted from a long day in the sun. A quick stop at the grocery store was a nice treat before arriving at the hotel. As a surprise, Toan, the group's YMCA host, ordered the group a Vietnamese version of an "American" dinner. Spaghetti, French fries, chicken drumstick and barbeque ribs filled the group up for the night.

Sunday, July 17th - Service at Binh Minh Kindergarten

After catching up on sleep and having three days to relax, the group was ready for more service. At Binh Minh Kindergarten in Dong Thap Province, the group split into two groups. One group tore down the front fence as prep for a new one and sanded the windows. The other group taught English to younger kids, while others practiced conversational skills with some of the village's teenagers. After lunch, the groups switched and had a very productive afternoon. Tired from the sun and hard work, the group had a low-key evening at the hotel before barbecuing their own dinner outside at the hotel.

Cabin Chat Question: **Do you live your life in the past, present or future?**

Monday, July 18th - Service at Binh Minh Kindergarten

The group returned to Binh Minh Kindergarten for their second day of service. Right away, the work group began to paint the windows and railings in the front of the school. The teaching group was pleased with the number of young students who showed up for the morning. More

than 35 kids were split into two groups to learn colors and foods, and to play games with the group. The group enjoyed another wonderful meal outside before napping inside, out of the heat. While some group members rested, others explored the village. After lunch, the groups switched and both had successful afternoons painting and teaching. Before dinner, the group spend time working on their camper reports and cleaning the bright blue paint off of them.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you could bring one person back from the dead and have a meal with them, who would it be?**

Tuesday, July 19th- Homestays in Dong Thap Province

The group enjoyed sleeping in before getting dropped off at their homestays. The three different groups enjoyed a day of pancake making, relaxing and sharing family pictures with their host families. The group returned to the hotel, showered and left for a dinner in Cao Lanh city. After dinner, the group ventured out for an evening on the town. Wandering around an outdoor market, the group enjoyed purchasing souvenirs. After the market, the group enjoyed delicious fruit smoothies at an outdoor café.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is the one thing you admire about the person to your right?**

Wednesday, July 20th- Final day of service at Binh Minh Kindergarten

The group's last day in Cao Lanh was spent doing service and attending the completion ceremony at Binh Minh Kindergarten. Everyone arrived at the school determined to finish painting the outside of the school. Half of the group got to work painting while the other half used games to review everything the children had learned that week. The group enjoyed the same lunch as Sunday, which they unanimously voted to be one of the best the group had had so far on the trip (pineapple shrimp, tofu with tomato sauce, rice and beef). After lunch, the group had a very short rest before getting back to work. All of the group's hard work paid off, and they finished painting the outside just in time to enjoy the completion ceremony. There were speeches from teachers, local leaders and two ICEP participants. The BCCYMCA presented local students with scholarships to further their education in the fall. Both the local youth and ICEP groups gave performances before the principal presented the group with a completion certificate and gift. The group had dinner outside at the Ward 11 government building. After dinner, the group was joined by many local people who came to play soccer, volleyball and dance with the group. A bonfire was lit when it got dark enough, and the entire group started a giant dance party with the kids. Dancing with the kids outside was the highlight of the trip for many participants. To top the night off, the group enjoyed smoothies and a quick chat. Cabin Chat Question: **If you could insert yourself into a book, which book would it be?**

Thursday, July 21st- Travel to Phu Quoc Island

A very early wake-up, breakfast and check-out kick started the group's long day of travel. Four hours on the bus and two ferries later, the group arrived in Rach Gia City hungry and eager to get to Phu Quoc Island. A quick seafood lunch satiated the group before their three hour boat ride on the super ferry, Superdong II. On the island, a bus met the group and drove them to their hotel on the other side of the island. The group quickly dropped their belongings in their room so they could spend every minute before dinner in the ocean. Everyone enjoyed floating and swimming in the warm water of the South China Sea. Dinner and stargazing happened on the beach before chat.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is your response to this song? (Jack Johnson, “Where’d all the good people go?”)**

Friday, July 22nd - Phu Quoc Island

A crepe breakfast overlooking the ocean was the perfect start to an island day. The group walked to the Original Point Museum and learned about the history of the island and its people. From the 6th floor of the museum, the group enjoyed an amazing 360 degree view of the ocean, town and mountains. After the museum, the group drove around the island to Bai Sao Beach where they spent the afternoon playing volleyball, swimming, and reading on the beach. On the way back to the hotel, the group stopped at Phu Quoc prison. The group walked around the old prison and visited the powerful museum that told the story of what had happened at the prison during the Vietnam War. The group returned to the hotel and quickly dropped off their belongings before walking to a French restaurant for dinner. The group enjoyed gallettes and burgers for dinner.

Cabin Chat Question: **What’s the first thing you’ll do when you get home?**

Saturday, July 23rd - Phu Quoc Island

The group enjoyed another crepe breakfast at the hotel before departing for the day. A quick visit to Dinh Cau Temple was the first stop of the day. The group took a bus drive through the north part of the island with a pit stop at Tranh Stream. The rest of the day was spent at Bai Sao Beach. Relaxing, playing volleyball, building sand castles, reading and swimming kept the group entertained and content until dinner time. The group split up for dinner in the downtown area and met up again to explore a night market.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is the theme song to your life?**

Sunday, July 24th - Travel Day

The group enjoyed a sleep-in and late breakfast before departing the hotel for the mainland. The group had lunch on the island and then boarded the ferry for a two hour ride. The rest of the day was spent on the bus heading back to Ho Chi Minh, with a quick dinner break in the Mekong Delta.

Cabin Chat Question (on the bus): **Do you believe in fate, or choosing your own destiny?**

Monday, July 25th - Ho Chi Minh City

After breakfast at the hotel, the group headed to the YMCA. Because there was a power outage, the group was unable to visit the sewing workshop as planned. The group was happy to spend the morning resting and playing cards at the YMCA. After a delicious lunch and with the power back on, the group visited the workshop. Following a demonstration, the group was able to try sewing. Afterwards, the group headed to a YMCA motorbike repair school and then on to a water puppet show. After dinner at the hotel, the group had an early night.

Cabin Chat Question: **What would you do if you had one day to spend one million dollars?**

Tuesday, July 26th - Ho Chi Minh City

With a few group members fighting off a sickness, twelve healthy participants left the hotel for the Imperial Palace and post office before lunch. The group enjoyed wandering through the palace and buying souvenirs at the post office. For lunch, the group enjoyed a buffet at a nearby restaurant. After lunch, the group visited the powerful War Remnants Museum. The group was glad that they were able to wander through the exhibits filled with sobering photos. After the

museum, the group headed to the Hope Vocational School where they toured the facility and made a handicraft project with a few of the school's students and instructors. Dinner was prepared by the school and it filled the group up before they returned to the hotel. Before chat, the group reflected on their experience at the museum. Cabin Chat Question: **What is your favorite childhood memory?**

Wednesday, July 27th - Travel to Dalat

The group had an early wake-up so they could get a jump start on their long day of traveling. After three hours on the bus, the group had a quick stop and then spent two and a half more hours driving before lunch and shopping at a large rest stop. Finally, the group arrived in Dalat and checked into the hotel. The group walked to another hotel for dinner and then spent the night exploring Dalat's extensive night markets.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is your biggest fear?**

Thursday, July 28th - Dalat City

A buffet breakfast at the hotel was a great way to start the group's first day in Dalat. In the morning, the group visited Bao Dai Palace and Thien Vien Truc Lam Pagoda. The group also took a gondola ride over the mountains for an amazing view of the countryside. The group enjoyed being outside of Ho Chi Minh City and in the cool mountain air. After lunch, the group wandered around the Dalat flower garden and then headed to the Embroidery Workshop where they saw beautiful pieces of art and clothing. Late in the afternoon, the group began their hike up Lang Biang Mountain. The hike was strenuous, but the group enjoyed the amazing view from the top. After dinner in the mountains, the group attended a cultural performance by the ethnic minorities in the area. Group members were able to participate in traditional dances and competitions at the ceremony.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is the best present you've ever received?**

Friday, July 29th - Dalat City

The group spent the morning with young kids from the YMCA Love Class Center. The group played games and sang songs with the kids. It poured rain the entire day, so the group spent an hour relaxing at the hotel before having a free lunch and wandering the streets of Dalat. The group visited a farm and had a relaxing afternoon of exploring and rest before a group dinner.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is your biggest weakness?**

Saturday, July 30th - Travel to Nha Trang

The group woke up to a clear day in Dalat and enjoyed a crowded buffet breakfast before leaving. The descent from the mountains to sea level provided the group with excellent views and photo opportunities. In Nha Trang, the group ate lunch, checked-in to the hotel and headed straight to the beach. After two hours of swimming in Nha Trang Bay, The group showered and wandered the tourist filled town. Dinner was close to the hotel and many group members enjoyed ice cream and smoothies after.

Cabin Chat Question: **What age do you think you act?**

Sunday, July 31st - Boat Cruise in Nha Trang Bay

After a buffet breakfast at a nearby hotel, the group headed to Nha Trang Port to board their boat for an all day cruise. An hour after leaving the port, the boat stopped and the spent the next hour

jumping into the water, snorkeling and swimming. The group moved to one other spot to do the same thing before enjoying lunch on the boat. The group made several more stops that afternoon to swim, visit islands and enjoy music. After a long day on the water, the group visited the Nha Trang Oceanography Institute before heading to the hotel. The group had a free dinner and split into two groups to enjoy Indian or Italian food. After chat, the group walked to the beach to ride the Ferris wheel overlooking the bay.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you could relive one day of your life, without changing anything about it, what day would it be?**

Monday, August 1st - Nha Trang and Night Train

For their last day in Nha Trang the group explored an outdoor market, and visited Ponagar Towers. Before lunch, the group went back to the hotel to check-out and have one last meal downtown. The afternoon was spent at the Thap Ba hot springs where the whole group enjoyed relaxing in mud baths, soaking in mineral pools and swimming in the pools. At the end of the day, the group headed to the Nha Trang train station to board a train for a nine-hour ride back to Ho Chi Minh City. The group had four sleeper cars, and everyone enjoyed the novelty of the tiny rooms and stacked beds. The most impressive feat of the night was fitting sixteen people into one room for cabin chat.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you could be a kitchen utensil, what would you be?**

Tuesday, August 2nd - Ho Chi Minh City

The day started at 3:45 a.m. as the train pulled into Ho Chi Minh City and the group got off of the train to head to the hotel. Everyone went right to bed before breakfast the next morning. The group had a very low-key morning with some members sleeping and some shopping near the hotel. After lunch, the group took taxis to Ben Tanh Market for an amazing afternoon of souvenir shopping and bargaining. The group enjoyed getting great deals on everything from clothing, to coffee, to hammocks and chopsticks. The group left the market feeling good about their purchases and walked to a nearby bowling alley for a quick game. After bowling, the group went to the U.S. Consulate for a visit with Sarah, a Chimney alum who works there. Sarah gave the group a tour of the courtyard and gave the group a brief history of the Consulate's property and the historical events that had happened there. The group enjoyed meeting an American who could speak Vietnamese fluently and who could answer many of the questions they'd had all trip about Vietnamese politics, culture and differences between America and Vietnam. After the consulate, dinner was at a nearby restaurant. The group enjoyed going out for smoothies after chat.

Cabin Chat Question: **If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

Wednesday, August 3rd - Dai Nam Resort

The group's last full day in Vietnam was a highlight for everyone. After breakfast, the group drove an hour outside of Ho Chi Minh City to Dai Nam resort, where the group spent the day on rides and visiting the zoo. At the zoo, the group was impressed with the variety of the animals and their ability to feed the elephants and giraffes. After a long day in the sun, the group went to the YMCA for dinner and the trip's completion ceremony. At the YMCA, the group received completion certificates and gave a thank-you speech to everyone at the YMCA who helped make the trip a success. Dinner was with many of the people the group had met over the course of the

trip. After dinner, the group enjoyed cultural performances from different YMCA groups in Ho Chi Minh City. The group was also able to perform four songs. To cap off their amazing trip, the group's hosts treated everyone to karaoke. It was a late night, but everyone had a lot of fun singing classic songs at the top of their lungs. The group had late chat and spent the rest of the night packing.

Cabin Chat Question: **What is your inner and outer scar?**

Thursday, August 4th - Travel to USA

After breakfast, the group checked-out of the hotel, boarded the bus and headed to the airport. The entire group was sad to be leaving Vietnam- the consensus was that everyone wanted to stay longer! The group said goodbye to their hosts, Toan, Ahn and Phuoc at the airport before starting their 26 hour journey home. The group flew to Hong Kong where they met ICEP China and headed for the US. The group arrived at Camp Becket and moved into Gibson Hall late Thursday night.

Friday, August 5th - Debrief at Camp Becket

The group enjoyed breakfast at Gibson Hall before getting their busy day started. After breakfast, the leaders took time to work on evaluations while participants created their slideshows. After lunch, the group met with Jim to debrief the trip and offer suggestions for next year. The afternoon continued with the slideshow and meetings with the leaders. After dinner, the group saw the ending of the Becket games, worked on the slideshow more, and then enjoyed a campfire and s'mores at the Ranger Amphitheater. The group had their last cabin chat outside at the amphitheater. Everyone was sad to be saying goodbye the next day so the group had a late last night.

Cabin Chat Question: **What will you miss most about Vietnam?**

Saturday, August 6th - Last day of ICEP Vietnam

The group woke-up sad knowing that they would be saying goodbye to each other after lunch. The group had breakfast at Becket before a kickball game against Peru on Moose Field. ICEP Vietnam redeemed themselves, after losing to Peru during orientation, by defeating Peru 1-0. The group returned to Gibson Hall to pack and rehearse their slideshow before loading their luggage onto a bus and walking over to the Chimney barn. Parents began to arrive just before 1 p.m. and the group enjoyed sharing their pictures and stories with their parents. The group said their last goodbyes and departed camp just before 3 p.m.