

LEARNING ACROSS BORDERS
SOUTHEAST ASIA ISSUES PROGRAM

This program allows students to interact closely with Southeast Asia: its people, cultures and current issues. By focusing on the two nations of Thailand and Malaysia—each with a distinct culture, religious heritage, and economic status—it is possible to appreciate the diversity of this dynamic region in which Japan plays an important role. The program focuses on:

- Meetings with **university students** in each nation, in order to understand the perspective of young people and their hopes for their societies and their own lives.
- The role of **NGOs** in a region in which they can be important forces. The group will meet with staffs of human rights, community development, human trafficking and women's organizations to get a firsthand view of how they work both with and outside of government to achieve their goals.
- **Political and economic factors** shaping each of these nations. Briefings will be given by knowledgeable professors in Thailand and Malaysia. Meetings with **UNICEF** and **UNHCR** officials emphasize important social issues like child trafficking and refugee flows.
- The role of **media**, especially new media. The founders of a widely-read and very successful Malaysian internet "newspaper" will explain how their website has become the leading alternative to the government-influenced media of that country. Producers and senior staff of alJazeera's Asian broadcast center explain how they see the world from a "global south" perspective, as contrasted with "global north" media like BBC, CNN and NHK.
- The central role of **religion** in both Malaysia and Thailand. Malaysia must balance the needs of the majority Malays (who are Muslim) with the Chinese and Indian populations. Thailand draws much of its unity from its Buddhist faith and the unique role of the monarchy, now in uncertain transition.
- **Village life.** Visitors to Southeast Asia typically see only urban areas, yet so many of the people and so much of the traditional culture are found in the countryside. The group will live in a Thai village for several days; this village has a coconut-based economy and a transportation system of small canals.
- The region's predominant **ecology**, which will be experienced firsthand through a day's trek in the rainforest of Malaysia.
- **English** as an international language of communication. All scheduled meetings, as well as group meetings and meals, will utilize English. Thus, participants get an "immersion" experience in the practical use of English as a worldwide language and should be committed to its use throughout the program.

The program allows participants to do what they could not do on their own: meet the people and organizations now shaping the future of this dynamic region. The emphasis is on *direct experience* with people and issues.

The group, while mostly Japanese, will include students from Myanmar. Thus, the group experience itself will be an international one.

Dates: February 13–25, 2017.

Cost: ¥188,000. Includes international airfare, hotel accommodations, most meals, chartered buses and guides where necessary.

For application and further information: Go to www.learning-across-borders.org/se-asia/application for program application. Application deadline: December 6, 2016; *early applications are strongly encouraged*. For further information, email info@learning-across-borders.org.

Information Meeting: 6:15 p.m., Thursday, December 1. Hiyoshi Communication Lounge.

2017 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- February 13, Monday** Depart for Bangkok. Transfer from Bangkok Airport to Siam Swana Hotel.
- February 14, Tuesday** Lecture on Thailand's current political and economic situation by Prof. Thitinan Pongsudhirak, Institute for Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University. Informal meeting over lunch with Chulalongkorn students. Afternoon briefing on human rights in Thailand and regions by Pokpong Lawansiri, National Human Rights Officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *B*
- February 15, Wednesday** Explore Wat Po, a much revered Buddhist temple complex on Rattanakosin island, and its famed Reclining Buddha. After lunch: a briefing by UNICEF staff on their efforts to protect children from the dangers of trafficking, HIV-AIDS, and other abuse. *B, L*
- February 16, Thursday** Exploration of the NGO community in Thailand. We look at the "underside" of Bangkok life through the work of the Duang Prateep Foundation in the Klong Toey slum. Afternoon: Emma Van Dam of Project Issara explains its fight against human trafficking and the supply chains which uphold it. *B*
- February 17, Friday** Free day to explore Bangkok on one's own. *B*
- February 18, Saturday** Depart Bangkok for Ta Kha village in Samut Songkram province. We'll observe life in the floating market and meet our village hosts, with whom we'll stay overnight. *B, L, D*
- February 19, Sunday** In the early morning, we join the village custom of offering food to monks in order to make Buddhist merit. After breakfast, we learn the process of producing coconut sugar—the main local industry. This is a day to appreciate the pace of life in rural Thailand. *B, L, D*
- February 20, Monday** We say goodbye to our village hosts and travel to Bangkok Airport. Afternoon flight to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Chartered bus transfer to ZON Residences (within easy walking distance of the famed Twin Towers). *B, D*
- February 21, Tuesday** Morning meeting with staff of the Women's Aid Organisation, an NGO which protects the rights of women and foreign workers. Afternoon briefing by UNHCR staff on situation of refugees in Malaysia, followed by visit to an informal school for refugee children. *B*
- February 22, Wednesday** On the campus of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, we meet with Prof. Stephen Leong, who surveys Malaysia's recent history and its place in the world. We join the university's students for lunch. Afternoon: we explore new media by meeting with the founders of *Malaysiakini* who explain how they have tapped the power of the internet to create an alternate news source. Evening activity. *B, L, D*
- February 23, Thursday** We travel to a nature preserve to trek in Malaysia's rainforest—an opportunity to understand firsthand this important Southeast Asia feature and resource. Lunch during jungle hike. Mid-afternoon return to Kuala Lumpur; rest of day free. *B, L*
- February 24, Friday** Morning: Producers and staff of alJazeera's Asian broadcast center explain their approach to comprehensive, reality-centered news gathering. Afternoon: final reflection session. Farewell dinner. *B, D*
- February 25, Saturday** Chartered bus transfer to Kuala Lumpur International Airport for flight home. *B*

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Leadership: This program is led by Dwight Clark, who first began introducing Asia to university students when he was Dean of Freshmen Men at Stanford University. He founded Volunteers in Asia (VIA) and served as its President for 40 years. In 2004 he started Learning Across Borders, a non-profit educational organization which offers international study programs such as this. He has led over forty study programs to Southeast Asia for Asian university students.

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