



Customized program developed for:  
**San Mateo County Community College District**  
Communication Studies in Vietnam and Thailand  
May 27 – June 6, 2024





**OFFICIAL NAME:** Socialist Republic of Vietnam

**CAPITAL:** Hanoi

**TOP LANGUAGES:** Vietnamese, English, French

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** manufacturing, agriculture, high-tech, rubber, food processing, garments, mining, cement

**MAJOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS:** rice, coffee, seafood, tea, black pepper, sugar, soybeans, cashews, peanuts, bananas, poultry, fish



## SPOTLIGHT ON VIETNAM

From the emerald mountains around Dalat to the azure waters of Nha Trang, visitors have been stunned by Vietnam's natural beauty for decades. Despite a successful reinvention as Southeast Asia's most sought-after tourist destination, Vietnam has retained its cultural style while catering to foodies and thrill seekers alike. Visitors often note the incredible transformation of Vietnam, recovering from the scars of the military assault known here simply as "the American War." It has also evolved into a powerful economic force in the region. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, its two most dynamic cities, bustle with a young and comparatively well-educated workforce.

Vietnam is a densely populated developing country that has been transitioning from a centrally-planned, agrarian economy to an industrial, market based economy since 1986. With a young population, stable political system, commitment to sustainable growth and strong manufacturing sector, Vietnam has a trajectory of strong economic growth. The country has committed to continuing global economic integration by joining the World Trade Organization, promoting more competitive, export-driven industries, and concluding several free trade agreements in 2015 and 2016. To diversify, Vietnam also signed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Transpacific Partnership in 2018. Despite the advances and growth of Vietnam, the government recognizes the need for more reforms including reducing red-tape, increasing business sector transparency, and reducing the level of non-performing loans in the banking sector. The current infrastructure in Vietnam fails to meet the needs of the growing middle class.

### TOPICS TO EXPLORE

**WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH** – Study the military history, from the lives of the POWs in the Hanoi Hilton to the network of underground tunnels that helped the Viet Cong survive. Consider the health effects of the Agent Orange gas that still plague many survivors and honor the tens of thousands who died.

**MANUFACTURING** – Since the end of the trade embargo in 1994 and rising labor costs in China, Vietnam is positioning itself as a low-cost alternative. Multinational corporations have flocked to Vietnam, led by corporations like Samsung, Coca Cola, and Unilever.

**AGRICULTURE** – Vietnam is an agricultural powerhouse, employing roughly 48% of the workforce. In recent years, Vietnam has been breaking rice export records, as the demand in Southeast Asia continues to grow. The rise of the global seafood market has also spurred growth, which now accounts for nearly 10% of total exports.

### BY THE NUMBERS

643.9 BILLION | ESTIMATED  
2017 GDP (USD PPP)

96.2 MILLION | POPULATION

331,210 KM<sup>2</sup> | TOTAL AREA

200+ CONNECTIONS

2,320+ MEETINGS PLANNED IN  
THE REGION



**OFFICIAL NAME:** Kingdom of Thailand  
**CAPITAL:** Bangkok  
**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES:** Thai, English  
**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Tourism, textiles, agricultural processing, ceramics, printing, light manufacturing, computers and parts, pharmaceuticals  
**MAJOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS:** sugar cane, cassava, rice, oil palm fruit, rubber, maize, tropical fruit, poultry, pineapples, mangoes/guavas



## SPOTLIGHT ON THAILAND

There's a reason Thailand is home to the most-visited city in the world, Bangkok, and attracted over 35 million visitors in 2017: it is a paradise of culture, history and natural beauty, offering visitors a true adventure. Thailand's capital city is a chaotic and thrilling blend of old and new. Thailand's food scene is as bustling in street markets as it is in Michelin-rated fine dining restaurants, and its Buddhist temples and giant Golden Buddha's offer a look into Thailand's unique and peaceful culture.

With a well-developed infrastructure, a free-enterprise economy, and generally pro-investment policies Thailand historically has a strong, growing economy with competitive industrial and agriculture exports - mostly electronics, agricultural commodities, automobiles and parts, and processed foods. The implementation of a nationwide minimum wage and new tax reforms designed to lower rates on middle-income earners have substantially reduced poverty in the last few decades. Recently, the economy is recovering from the slow growth following the 2014 coup. Tourism and government spending on infrastructure and short-term stimulus measures have helped to boost the economy as well as support from the Bank of Thailand. The country faces long term risks from labor shortages, domestic debt levels, political uncertainty and an aging population.

### TOPICS TO EXPLORE

**BUDDHISM** – More than 90% of the population practice Buddhism. The rural and urban landscape feature countless temples and places of worship. Join the conversation through meditation retreats to Chiang Mai, religious festivals, underground cave shrines, or among hilltop temples.

**FOOD & BEVERAGE** – Recent industrialization has brought access to more sophisticated farming technology, greater capacity to adhere to international quality standards, and enhanced ability to maximize its arable land as a resource. Explore how advanced technology keeps prices low as one of the world's largest food exporters.

**ENERGY, OIL & GAS** – Until recently, more than 2/3 of Thailand's labor force was employed in agriculture. As Thailand's middle class starts to play a larger economic role and increase its energy consumption, understand the challenges of this country's dependence on crude oil imports, and the inherent threat to economic stability.

### BY THE NUMBERS

1.28 TRILLION | EST 2019 GDP (USD PPP)

68.4 MILLION | POPULATION

513,120 KM<sup>2</sup> | TOTAL AREA

60 CONNECTIONS

1,200+ MEETINGS PLANNED IN THE REGION

# Your customized Tentative Itinerary

## Communication Studies in Vietnam and Thailand

### May 27, 2024 | Program Begins

Monday  
Day 1

**Meals Included**  
Per airline

- Flight departs for Ho Chi Minh City – *Arranged by WorldStrides.*  
*\*\*\* not currently included in program price, as flights can only be quoted 10 months prior to departure \*\*\**

### May 28 | Ho Chi Minh City

Tuesday  
Day 2

**Meals Included**  
Per airline  
Dinner

**Ho Chi Minh City  
Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (1 of 4)

*Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City! Still commonly called Saigon, this modern metropolis quickly banishes any stereotype of Vietnam as a nation of terraced rice paddies and remote delta lowlands. Surging with the energy of a place that has made incredible strides in just 20 years, Ho Chi Minh City provides an opportunity to explore a dark past in a city where the future is bright.*

- At the most common arrival time of all participants, transfer to your accommodations – *Local staff and private transportation included.*
- Participate in a brief **Health and Safety Orientation** before your program begins – *Orientation will be en route to hotel.*
- Check-in to your accommodations or store luggage if check-in is unavailable.
- In the evening, taste the local cuisine with a group **Welcome Dinner** – *Local staff and private transportation included.*

May 29 | Ho Chi Minh City

Wednesday  
Day 3

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Ho Chi Minh City Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (2 of 4)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *Full day local staff and private transportation included.*

**Cu Chi Tunnels (Guided)**

Work on the tunnels began during the war against the French in the 1940s and over the next 25 years as the conflict with America escalated, they were improved and expanded to create an underground city of meeting areas, storerooms, living quarters and much more. The tunnels allowed the Viet Cong to control a vital area of South Vietnam and at their height, extended for more than 200KM in length and stretched from what was then Saigon to the Cambodian border.

While visiting Ben Dinh there is the option to go below the surface and visit sections of the tunnels firsthand. The more adventurous may go deeper and your guide will be on hand to give guidance on the degree of expected difficulty. However, there is plenty to do above ground as well and it is recommended to bring good footwear, sunscreen, and a hat. Please note you may get a little dusty if you decide to go underground! (guide and fees included)

- Return to Ho Chi Minh City via private transportation.
- Break for lunch on own.
- Continue to next visit on foot.

**Ho Chi Minh City Walking Tour (Guided)**

Why travel any other way when you could enjoy the sights, sounds and scenery on a slow-paced walking tour that takes you to some of the city’s landmarks and historic icons? With your leg powers instead of petrol, this trip shows you an in-depth look into culture, history, locals’ daily life, activities, and more photographic opportunities en route.

Greeted by our guide in your hotel at the center, walking on the pavement via most magnificent French colonial monuments of the city landmarks such as Opera House, City Hall and stop at the Notre Dame Cathedral and Post Office. A historical story was introduced back over 100-year time of the city marked in the heart of Saigon. After a selfie-shot of the place, keep your feet follow the path to Reunification Palace nearby. Formerly named the Presidential Palace, this important city landmark was assured its place in history on 30th April 1975, when the first North Vietnamese tanks rumbled past, signaling the Fall of Saigon and ultimately the end of the Vietnam War. After the visit, walk to one of the War Remnant Museum which is primarily dedicated to the Vietnam War but also includes exhibits dating back to the French colonialist period and the first Indochina War. (guide and fees included)

- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

May 30 | Ho Chi Minh City

Thursday  
Day 4

**Meals Included**

Breakfast  
Lunch

**Ho Chi Minh City  
Accommodations**

3\* Hotel or similar (3 of 4)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *Full day local staff and private transportation included.*

**Mekong Delta Excursion (Guided)**

The Mekong Delta is a rich fertile region of farmland interlaced with countless waterways crisscrossed by low-lying rice paddies. Today you will explore one of the country’s most enchanting landscapes travelling by car and then motorized sampan (a flat-bottomed wooden boat) into the ‘rice bowl’ of Vietnam.

Around 7.30 am, meet with your tour guide for a 2.5-hour drive to Ben Tre to experience the lush countryside of the Mekong area with tranquil river landscapes, and the warmth of its people. The riverside promenade and the narrow lanes on both sides of the river are ideal for two-wheeled exploration if you are a cycling lover. Upon arrival, hop on a local bike for a leisurely 5-7km ride (otherwise motor-tricycle) through quiet village lanes surrounded by vegetable gardens and rivers. You might want to challenge yourself to cross over the monkey bridge, which is a handmade bamboo walkway built across canals and gullies. Along the way, get off your bike and walk through a small rice field for a glimpse into an integral part of rice in Vietnamese culture. The rice-growing cycle is continuous, and depending on the season, you could see either lush green fields, fields flooded with water, or empty fields recently harvested. Ride further to the village communal house originally built in the 19th century where the farmers usually come to pray for their wishes. Wind your way further to the local cottage industry of brick kiln factories where the baking methods have not changed for centuries. They bake the bricks by hand inside the large dome-shaped kiln. Ben Tre owns the largest coconut-growing area in the country. Chance to observe family-run coconut candy-making coconut-peeling factories. (guide and fees included)

- Enjoy lunch as a group during the tour.
- Continue on excursion.

Then get on motorized boat for a cruise along the main river for an insight into agriculture-river life. Enjoy a motor-tricycle ride onward to a rustic local restaurant for lunch with Mekong Delta specialties. After lunch, relax in a rowing sampan ride through idyllic canals covered with shady water coconut groves. (guide and fees included)

- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

**May 31 | Ho Chi Minh City**

Friday  
Day 5

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Ho Chi Minh City Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (4 of 4)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *Half day local staff and private transportation included.*

**Half Day Unveiling Saigon’s Chinatown (Guided)**

Experience the vibrant district of Cholon, the heart of Saigon's Chinese community. Translating to big market, Cholon is home to Mandarin speakers, ancient pagodas, and shops adorned with Chinese script. Begin your exploration with a visit to FITO - the first museum on traditional herbal medicine, offering fascinating insights into traditional Vietnamese everyday life and medical development over the centuries.

Next, head to the Thien Hau temple, dedicated to the Lady of the Sea, who is believed to be able to locate and rescue those in trouble on the high seas. Enjoy a guided walk through the bustling trading areas, watch skillful craftsmen at work on Scissors Street. Along this former Rue de Canton, admire the ancient fusion French and Chinese architecture and immerse yourself in the local atmosphere of this unique district. Then discover traditional herbal medicine quarter, just by standing on the street, you can inhale the typical smell of herbs spreading through the air. If time permits, stroll through the side road of the age-old Dai Quang Minh market. Don’t get lost in the colorful world of stalls selling apparel and garment accessories from buttons, buckles to ribbons. (guide and entrance included)

- Break for lunch on own.
- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

**June 1 | Ho Chi Minh City to Bangkok**

Saturday  
Day 6

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Bangkok Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (1 of 5)

- Check out of your accommodations and depart for the airport – *Local staff and private transportation included.*

**Flight to Bangkok** - *Approximately 1 hour & 50 minutes*

**Intra-Program Flight** – *Quote only – Subject to Change*

Flight #	Origin	Destination	Departure	Arrival
VN 605	Ho Chi Minh City (SGN)	Bangkok (BKK)	11:20 a.m.	1:10 p.m.

*Welcome to Bangkok! The City of Angels is a chaotic and thrilling blend of old and new – ancient, gilded Buddhist temples dot the landscape, while fragrant food carts beckon to insatiable travelers and locals alike. Mingle with monks, commute on a canal boat, and become part of the crowd at a pulsing local market in Thailand’s entrancing capital city.*

- Upon arrival, make your way to your accommodations – *Local staff and private transportation included.*
- Check-in to your accommodations or store luggage if check-in is unavailable.
- Break for lunch on own.
- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

### June 2 | Bangkok

Sunday  
Day 7

**Meals Included**

Breakfast  
Lunch

**Bangkok Accommodations**

3\* Hotel or similar (2 of 5)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *Full day local staff and private transportation included.*

**The Grand Palace, Wat Pho, and Pak Klong Talat (Guided)**

The Grand Palace is the “must see” attraction in Bangkok. It is an architectural wonder of golden stupas, walls, and pillars encrusted in shining and colorful mosaics. Previously the residence of past Kings of Thailand, you will see palaces once used for different occasions; the Reception Hall, the Coronation Hall, the Throne Hall, the Royal Guest House, and Wat Phra Kaew. The architecture is predominantly Thai, though there are some European influences. The palace served as the official residence of kings of Thailand from the 18th to the mid-20th century. (guide and entrances included)

- Break for lunch as a group.
- Continue to next visit.

Continue to Wat Po, with its massive reclining Buddha. Equally spectacular, one of the largest temple complexes in the city and home to a colossal reclining Buddha that is 46 meters long, covered in gold leaf. The temple garden contains a Bodhi tree grown from a cutting of an original tree in India under which the Lord Buddha sat while awaiting enlightenment and a famous traditional Thai massage school., and then end your tour at the Flower Market. (guide and entrances to Wat Phra Krew, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun included)

- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

### June 3 | Bangkok

Monday  
Day 8

**Meals Included**

Breakfast  
Lunch

**Bangkok Accommodations**

3\* Hotel or similar (3 of 5)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *Full day local staff and private transportation included.*

**Amulet Market (Guided)**

Visit the lively bazaar selling Buddhist amulets, coins, & good-luck charms. As one of the largest markets in Southeast Asia, the Amulet Market is a sight to see. (guide included; entrance fees not applicable)

- Enjoy lunch as a group.
- Continue to next visit.

**Wat Rakhang – Wang Lang Market (Guided)**

In a visit for street food lovers, walk through Wang Lang food market. Students will have the opportunity to buy affordable and delicious Thai food. (guide included; entrance fees not applicable)

- Continue to next visit.

**National Museum of Thailand (Guided)**

In the former grounds of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Wang Na Palace, the Bangkok National Museum houses the largest collection of Thai art and artifacts in the country. (guide and entrance included)

- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.



### June 4 | Bangkok

Tuesday  
Day 9

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Bangkok Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (4 of 5)

- Make your way to today's engagements – *Half day local staff and private transportation included.*

**Boat Tour of Chao Phraya River, Thonburi Klongs, and Wat Arun (Guided)**

One of the best ways to explore Bangkok is by boat. A cruise along the Chao Phraya River and through the canals of Thonburi on the east side of the river reveals a scene that offers a stark contrast to the frenzied activity of the modern metropolis of Bangkok. The city's network of canals earned Bangkok the title of "Venice of the East" we travel along these waterways by long-tail boat to witness a more traditional way of Thai life up close. You will be delighted to discover such a level of tranquility as you drift past old wooden homes on stilts, Buddhist temples and shrines and small family businesses along the "Klongs" of Bangkok. On the return journey, we stop at the Temple of Dawn (Wat Arun) whose towering spire has become an iconic symbol of Bangkok. There will be ample opportunities to photograph the magnificent multi-colored porcelain-studded tower of this temple. (guide and fees included)

- Break for lunch on own.
- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

### June 5 | Bangkok

Wednesday  
Day 10

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast  
Lunch  
Dinner

**Bangkok Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (5 of 5)

- Make your way to today's engagements – *Full day local staff and private transportation included.*

**Ayutthaya - UNESCO World Heritage Site (Guided)**

Visit the ancient city of Ayutthaya, the former Thai capital for 417 years and one of Thailand's major tourist attractions. Many ancient ruins and art works can be seen around the city and Ayutthaya Historical Park, which was founded in 1350 by King U-Thong. A total of 33 kings of five dynasties ruled the kingdom until it was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767. The UNESCO-listed city includes attractions such Wat Mahathat, and be amazed by the famous Buddha head in the banyan tree, Wat Phra Sri Sanpetch with a three spire pagoda; the large Buddha image of Phra Mongkol Bophit; and Wat Chaiya Mongkol. Lunch will be served and continue to cruise the waterways around Ayutthaya by long tail boat, taking in the incredible sights of the city. Drifting along the river you will pass local communities, traditional Thai style houses and more famous monuments. (guide and entrance fees included)

- Enjoy lunch as a group during tour.
- Continue to next visit.

**Wat Chaiwatthanaram (Guided)**

Visit one of the most visited historical sites of Ayutthaya - Wat Chaiwattanaram. The Temple was ordered to be built in 1630 by King Prasat Thong to honor his mother, featuring the architectural style influenced by Angkor temple in Cambodia. (guide and entrance fees included)

- Continue to next visit.

**Bang Pa-In (Guided)**

This excursion takes you to Bang Pa-In, the former Royal Summer Residence of King Rama V. A number of impressive buildings can be found in the palace complex, consisting of a quaint mixture of European and Thai architecture. (guide and entrance fees included)

- Return back to Bangkok via boat. (\*\*Note: boat may be open to other guests)
- In the evening, reflect on your experiences with a group **Farewell Dinner** – *Local staff and private transportation included.*

June 6 | Program Ends

Thursday  
Day 11

**Meals Included**

Breakfast  
Per airline

- Check out of your accommodations.
- At the most common departure time of all participants, transfer to the airport – *Local staff and private transportation included.*
- Flights return home – *Arranged by WorldStrides.*  
\*\*\* *not currently included in program price, as flights can only be quoted 10 months prior to departure*\*\*\*

## OPTIONAL: POST-PROGRAM

### June 6 | Bangkok to Cha-am

Thursday  
Day 11

- Check out of your accommodations and depart for your next destination – *Local staff and private transportation included.*

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Coach to Cha-am** - Approximately 4 hours & 15 minutes

**Cha-am Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (1 of 2)

*Welcome to Cha-am! Locals flock to this cheery hotspot that has something for all types of beachgoers – from exhilarating banana boat rides to tree-shaded picnics. Cha-am has an airy atmosphere, thanks to its sprawling resorts, and is one of the most affordable locales on the Gulf.*

- Upon arrival, make your way to your accommodations – *Local staff and private transportation included.*
- Check-in to your accommodations or store luggage if check-in is unavailable.
- Break for lunch on own.
- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

### June 7 | Cha-am

Friday  
Day 12

- Enjoy the day free on own spending some time at the beach!

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Cha-am Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (2 of 2)

### June 8 | Cha-am to Bangkok

Saturday  
Day 13

- Enjoy the morning free on own spending some time at the beach!
- Check out of your accommodations and depart for your next destination – *Local staff and private transportation included.*

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

**Coach Back to Bangkok** - Approximately 2 hours & 30 minutes

**Bangkok Accommodations**  
3\* Hotel or similar (1 of 1)

- Upon arrival, make your way to your accommodations – *Local staff and private transportation included.*
- Check-in to your accommodations or store luggage if check-in is unavailable.
- Break for lunch on own.
- Enjoy the remainder of the day free on own with dinner on own.

### June 9 | Program Ends

Sunday  
Day 14

- Check out of your accommodations.
- At the most common departure time of all participants, transfer to the airport – *Local staff and private transportation included.*

**Meals Included**  
Breakfast

- Flights return home – *Arranged by WorldStrides.*  
*\*\*\* not currently included in program price, as flights can only be quoted 10 months prior to departure; estimate provided below; note: post-program participant flight prices may vary from estimate \*\*\**