SPRING 2025 – SOUTHEAST ASIA OVERVIEW

Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia

February 23 – March 22

The AEO Tour – Spring 2025 Southeast tours visited 6 countries and 12 cities (Singapore / Indonesia – Jakarta, Surabaya, Bali / Thailand – Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket / Malaysia – Kuala Lumpur / Vietnam – Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Hanoi / Cambodia – Phnom Penh). We had 61 school visits and met over 4,500 students in four weeks!

Below, is a summary of each of the countries we visited this spring.

SINGAPORE: Feb. 23-25

We had a great time in Singapore and all the school fairs were productive. We added a few new schools that we haven't visited since before the pandemic and it was great to have them back on the schedule. On the first day, we had 3 school fairs and then most of us went to the city to enjoy local hawker food and watched the light shows at Marina Bay and Gardens by the Bay. On the second day, we checked out, had 2 school fairs and flew to Jakarta. At 2 of the schools, we were able to give presentations in conjunction with our fairs as an added value to the students and counselors.

Statistics: Singapore

8 participating institutions: 7 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges: 7
Number of 2-year colleges: 0
Number of school fairs: 5
Number of total students, counselors, & parents seen: 260

INDONESIA (JAKARTA, SURABAYA, BALI): Feb. 25-March 3

We arrived in Jakarta in the late evening and had a very early start in Jakarta. On the first day, we had 4 school fairs with 3 presentations. Each fair was productive as we were able to talk with most of the grade 10 and 11 students. A few members of the group went out to dinner and the rest chilled at the hotel.

On the second day, we checked out, had 2 school fairs and then flew to Surabaya. It was another long day and late night, as we didn't reach out hotel until 9:30pm. We had a short stay in Surabaya and checked out early in the morning and headed for 3 school fairs and 1 presentation. Surabaya doesn't get a lot of visits from the USA and the schools are very eager to host us.

We reached our hotel in Bali late at night on Friday, March 28 and it was very nice to relax and catch up on rest from the busy week. Everyone had the following morning off to rejuvenate/get a bad sun burn/explore Bali and then we had a counselor dinner with the Bali counselors at the hotel.

We enjoyed the day off on Sunday and were prepared for another busy week. On Monday, we had 3 school fairs in Bali (which is quite an accomplishment with the traffic haha), but it was great to visit all 3 schools, as they were all very appreciative. The group did a great job presenting on a variety of majors at the last school and we finished the visit with a fair. After the last visit, we headed for the airport for our flight to Bangkok.

Statistics: Indonesia
11 participating institutions: 9 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges: 11
Number of 2-year colleges: 0
Number of school fairs: 12
Number of total students, counselors, & parents seen: 755

THAILAND (BANGKOK, CHIANG MAI, PHUKET): March 3-9
We arrived late to the hotel in Bangkok and fortunately, were able to have a later departure the next morning. Our first day in Bangkok, we had 2 school fairs and the power went out at the first school, so every high school student attended our fair and it worked out great for us haha. After the second school, the group split and either returned to the hotel or drove to the Khao Kheow Open Zoo to see Moo Deng. It was an awesome experience and the group loved it! Most of us enjoyed a buffet dinner that night at the greatest buffet in the world – The Goji Bar.

The following day was very busy as we checked out and left the hotel at 7:00am and had 4 school fairs, ran a series of workshops at the third school, and flew to Chiang Mai in the evening. We arrived at the hotel in time for the group to enjoy some local Thai food.

We were only in Chiang Mai for one day and had 3 great school fairs. We enjoyed a peaceful drive up the canyon on our way to the first school and we had time to visit a beautiful European resort & garden in the mountains. It was an unexpected and a great way to start the day. All the fairs were great and we even had enough time to enjoy eating at my favorite restaurant, Dash Teak House, for dinner. We had a late-night flight to Phuket and didn't reach the hotel until nearly 1:00am.

Although the group was tired, everyone powered through the 2 school fairs in Phuket and they were great! The first school was holding their "International Day" and it was a fun time to be at the school for a fair as everyone was dressed up in their traditional clothing and there were lots of parents were on campus. We all returned to the hotel in the afternoon in time to rest a bit before the Counselor Networking Retreat started.

For the Counselor Networking Retreat, 10 school counselors from Singapore, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ho Chi Minh City, and Kuala Lumpur were invited to join us in Phuket for the weekend. We had a wonderful time networking, learning from each other, and sharing wonderful meals together. The highlight of the event was our speed-networking session and the open forum, as everyone was able to bring up topics, questions, and key issues that they needed help. Everyone worked together so well and provided solutions and advice freely with each other and I think we all benefited from the collaboration. I can confidently say that everyone grew professionally from the experience and close friendships were formed. It was a fantastic experience and the group couldn't have been better! This was our 2nd Counselor Networking Retreat and I am excited to start planning the 3rd next year!

After Phuket, many of the group returned home as that concluded Part 1 of the Southeast Asia Tour, but a few remained on the tour and we flew to Kuala Lumpur on Sunday afternoon.

Statistics: Thailand
12 participating institutions: 9 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges: 12
Number of 2-year colleges: 0
Number of school fairs: 11
Number of total students, counselors, & parents seen: 722

MALAYSIA (KUALA LUMPUR): March 9-12
We arrived late in the evening on Sunday and had a quick turnaround as we left Monday morning at 6:50am for an early morning fair. We had 3 school fairs on our first day in Kuala Lumpur and finished the night with a counselor dinner in the hotel. We had 12 counselors attend and it was a great time!

On the second day, we had 3 school fairs and one presentation. One of the school's hosted us for the first time and they are interested in creating 2+2 partnerships with US universities, so it was a great opportunity for our group to be their first ever USA university fair.

Our final day was great, but crazy. We had 4 school fairs and one presentation. Usually this is our ADTP (American Degree Transfer Program) day, but since 2 of the 4 schools were on Spring Break due to a weird scheduling year, it created an opportunity to go to a high school that I have been trying to have a fair with since 2019. Several hundred students and parents attended and it was amazing! Again, we were the first USA university group to ever visit for a fair and it was a great opportunity. They have already invited us back for the fall and we are excited! The remaining visits were great and the final visit, each university had time to share information about their universities to the counseling staff. Due to bad weather and multiple traffic accidents on the highways, our short commute to the airport

turned into multiple hours, which caused us to miss our flight to Vietnam. We were able to make quick adjustments, but we had to stay an extra night in KL, before joining the group in HCMC, Vietnam. I was proud of the group for staying positive and not complaining. It was an experience for sure!

Statistics: Malaysia
14 participating institutions: 12 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges: 12
Number of 2-year colleges: 2
Number of school fairs: 10
Number of total students, counselors, & parents seen: 606

VIETNAM (HO CHI MINH CITY, DA NANG, HANOI): March 12-19
We had a large group in Vietnam and we had a great time! Most of the group was in HCMC on April 12, so fortunately my wonderful Assistant, Betty, was able to lead the group in HCMC in the morning. I arrived with the group from KL in the morning and joined the group at the second school fair and the remaining universities from KL were able to join the third school fair. All the fairs on the first day were very busy with interested students. For dinner, most of us went to the "Word Famous" Rico Taco haha.

On the second day in HCMC, we visited 4 more schools and had a counselor dinner at the second-best buffet in SE Asia. We were happy to have 9 other counselors join us for dinner and we had a wonderful time networking and catching up!

On Saturday, we checked out and flew to Da Nang and stayed at a beautiful hotel on the coast. We had a group dinner that night and it was fun to be with everyone. On Sunday morning, we had a large fair with the largest university in Da Nang and they invited students from local high schools to attend. The university is interested in creating 2+2 partnerships with USA Universities and I think it will be a great connection moving forward! AEO Tour also signed an MOU to help support them in their efforts. We had the rest of the day off and many of us spent the evening in the ancient town of Hoi An.

We checked out on Monday afternoon and flew to Hanoi for the final stretch of Vietnam. As soon as we landed, many of us went out to the famous "Obama Noodle" restaurant and enjoyed train street. On Tuesday, we had 4 school fairs and were able to visit 2 new schools for the first time and they were fantastic fairs. For dinner, we ate at Tim Ho Wan inside the Lotte Hotel and were joined by 7 counselors. We had a great time and the dinner was delicious.

On our final day of Hanoi, we checked out and visited 3 schools for fairs, including one school that we had never visited before. Each visit was great and the counselors did a great job bringing all their students out to the fairs. After the last fair, we celebrated the legend – Greg Barattini – for his years of service, hard work, friendship, guidance, and famous

zingers! “Santa Maria!”. We will miss you Greg! After the last visit, we headed directly for the airport to fly to Phnom Penh Cambodia.

Statistics: Vietnam
22 participating institutions: 15 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges: 18
Number of 2-year colleges: 4
Number of school fairs: 16
Number of total students, counselors, & parents seen: 1,025

CAMBODIA (PHNOM PENH): March 19-22
The group arrived in the evening of March 19 and many of us went to a local noodle shop near the hotel that has been a staple of the AEO Tour. It was fun being with everyone and supporting the local family restaurant.

On Thursday, we were able to catch up on rest in the morning and had 2 school fairs. Phnom Penh is always great as the students are very interested and don’t get as many visits as other cities in Southeast Asia. The students and counselors are wonderful! We returned in the evening and had a great counselor dinner at the hotel and had 3 counselors attend.

On Friday, we had 4 very busy school fairs and capped it off with a meeting with a large agency that is interested in sending their students to the USA. It could be beneficial for some of the institutions moving forward. We returned to the hotel that evening and had a final group dinner at Pizza 4P’s. The group was amazing and it was fun to be with everyone for a final night.

On Saturday, many of the group had breakfast together before we all parted ways. It is always difficult to say goodbye at the end of the tour, because everyone is so amazing and the “AEO Fam” is a real thing!

Statistics: Cambodia
11 participating institutions: 7 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges: 6
Number of 2-year colleges: 5
Number of school fairs: 7
Number of total students, counselors, & parents seen: 517

FINAL THOUGHTS
The older that I’m getting, the more I realize that life is about taking care of one another. That is what the AEO Tour & AEO Family are all about. Me taking care of you, you taking care of each other and taking care of me, us taking care of the school counselors and the

students and the counselors taking care of us. It's all about people and you have been the absolute best group of people that I have could have traveled with in Southeast Asia. Thank you!

Thanks for being your authentic and amazing selves. You've all been so beautifully different and fun. It's been an honor to have you on the tour and I'm truly grateful. I love the AEO Fam! To me, this is more than a tour and I think many of you have felt that way too on this trip and that makes me happy.

Safe travels back home - keep dominating - keep positively impacting others - keep bringing the fresh perspective to those that do not have this opportunity - keep being an example of how we can work together - and keep enjoying each day! I believe there is no limit to the good times, adventures, love, and growth we can experience - so while I'm sad when we depart, I'm looking forward to the next adventure with you! I love you all. I'm grateful for you. I will see you soon! 🙏 👊 ❤️

Love,
Tour Helper Man
Ben