FALL 2025 – SOUTHEAST ASIA TOUR REPORT

BRUNEI, PHILIPPINES, THAILAND, MALAYSIA, VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, SINGAPORE

SEPTEMBER 14-OCTOBER 9

The AEO Tour Fall 2025 Southeast Asia Tour visited 7 countries and 11 cities in Brunei / Philippines – Manila / Thailand – Chiang Mai & Bangkok / Malaysia – Kuala Lumpur & Johor Bahru / Vietnam – Hai Phong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City / Cambodia – Phnom Penh / Singapore. We had 54 school fairs, survived typhoons & traffic protests, and met nearly 3,500 students!

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

BRUNEI: Sept. 14-15

We had such a wonderful time in Brunei! This was our second time leading a tour in Brunei and it was packed! We arrived Sunday evening and immediately left for a dinner at one of the counselor's homes. We shared laksa together and it was so fun to be in a home for once. Brunei is truly a hidden gem and I am so happy everyone loved it!

To start our Monday, most of us enjoyed an early morning boat ride to see the famous proboscis monkeys, alligators, and various wildlife. It was so fun! We returned to the hotel for a quick shower and change and were on our way to the first school fair at a local Sixth Form Center. The Ministry of Education visited and it was a great honor for us! The government, students, and school really showed their appreciation and we were grateful to visit. After, we had 2 school fairs the international schools and they were both great! The counselors in Brunei are some of the best in the field! The students were all engaged and interested and it was a fantastic day!

After the last fair, the group departed ways and some of us flew to the next city – Manila.

<u>Statistics: Brunei</u>

Participating Institutions: 7

States Represented: 6 (1 international)

Number of 4-year Colleges: 6

Number of 2-year Colleges: 1

Number of School Fairs: 3

Number of Total Students Seen: 144

PHILIPPINES (Manila): Sept. 16-18

This was our first tour back to Manila since before the pandemic and it was great! The schools were very eager to host us and the students were very interested and enthusiastic! There were

a few things stacked against us during our time in Manila, but it all worked out! Firstly, there was a possible typhoon coming in while we were there, but fortunately, we were able to get our work done and fly to Thailand before it hit. Secondly, there was a large traffic protest in Manila that canceled one of our fairs, but it did allow for us to have almost zero traffic for our two days of fairs. We were able to pivot and mail materials to the school that had to cancel since they were forced to go to online learning for the week.

For our first day of fairs, we visited 4 schools and had 3 fairs. The first was the best and they had several parents attend as well - which is always great! The second fair was not as busy as it was during a class break, but the students that participated were great. After the second fair, we traveled to a school to meet the counselors and drop off materials for the school's career fair that was taking place that afternoon. They really wanted to host us, but the timing didn't work out this Fall. For our last fair, we traveled south at one of the largest schools in Manila and had an after-school fair with interested students and parents. It was a fabulous day!

On the second day, we were able to rest in the morning and then visited 2 schools for fairs. The first school was very busy and they had the entire high school class participate. The organization and setup were perfect! After, we had a short break to see the Manila American Cemetery, which is the largest American military cemetery overseas. It was a great experience to learn more about the brave American and Filipino soldiers that sacrificed their lives during the battles the Pacific during World War 2.

At the second school, we were the first ever group to visit for a university fair and although the numbers were small, everyone was very grateful for our visit! The hospitality was exceptional among all the schools in Manila. We all returned to the hotel and got some work done in the lounge before we headed to Chiang Mai on a late night/early morning flight!

<u>Statistics: Manila</u>
Participating Institutions: 10
States Represented: 10
Number of 4-year Colleges: 10
Number of 2-year Colleges: 0
Number of School Fairs: 5 (with 1 visit to drop off materials and a short meet & greet, and 1 cancelation due to the Traffic Protest)
Number of Total Students Seen: 260

THAILAND (Chiang Mai & Bangkok): Sept. 18-23
We arrived in Chiang Mai early in the morning and had a few hours to rest before we headed

out for our school fairs. We had 4 fairs that were all super busy. Each visit was packed with interested students and all the reps worked so hard with limited sleep! They were the best fairs we have ever had in Chiang Mai! We returned to the hotel and most of us went out to eat at Dash Teak House (one of the all-time great restaurants).

We were able to enjoy a much-needed day off the following day. The group went shopping, hiking, visited temples, or chilled at the hotel. That night we had a group dinner with one counselor attending. The next morning, we flew to Bangkok and joined more reps that were awaiting our arrival.

Our first day in Bangkok, we had 4 school fairs and the first two were very busy. The last two were a little slower, but it was still a productive day. We had a group dinner with counselors at the Goji Bar, which is the best buffet in the world in my opinion. It was another incredible dinner and we had a wonderful time with 6 counselors that attended.

Our final day in Bangkok, we had 3 fantastic school fairs and a mindfulness session with the one of the schools. The owner of the school is a firm believer of mindfulness and she invited her monk, Hartanto, to explain his mindfulness philosophy and it was a great experience. At the final school fair, they invited their entire upper classman for a pizza party and college fair and it was a great idea and turnout. We are grateful when the school administration is so supportive of our fairs and wants their students to be open to explore all types of universities and colleges. We left the last school and headed directly to the airport for our flight to Kuala Lumpur.

<u>Statistics: Thailand</u>
Participating Institutions: 10
States Represented: 7
Number of 4-year Colleges: 9
Number of 2-year Colleges: 1
Number of School Fairs: 11
Number of Total Students Seen: 746

MALAYSIA (Kuala Lumpur): Sept. 23-27

We arrived late at night on Sept. 23 and took the train to the hotel, which is conveniently located at the train station. We were joined by a larger group of universities and it was great to see many returning universities and friends. Our stop in Kuala Lumpur is always popular and the schedule is always very busy.

The first day of fairs in KL was dedicated to the American Degree Transfer Programs (ADTP) and we visited 4 colleges/universities in KL that offer the program. These schools are great to visit as most of the students are planning on studying 2 years in KL and 2 years in the USA. Each visit

was very busy and better than previous years! We all enjoyed a night off and most of us had dinner together at a Yemeni restaurant that is a favorite of mine (Wadi Hadramawt).

For the next day of fairs, we visited 3 schools and the first and last were very busy as they invited every upper classman to attend the fair. We are usually the only group that visits these schools, so they always have great turnouts for us. The second school was a little slower, but the school is more selective with universities, as it is the top high school in KL. It is still great to visit as most of their students want to study in the USA. That night, many of us had Indian food for dinner and had fun at the Escape Rooms in the nearby mall.

We visited 2 schools for fairs on the last day. We were honored to be the first group of USA universities to ever participate in the first school's annual Fall University Fair! Although they put us outside for several hours, the school was very hospitable and they were grateful that we were there. It was a great experience to talk with their excited students and parents. The second fair was great as well and we finished the night off and had our largest counselor dinner ever at the hotel! It was an awesome time with everyone and we had 25 counselors attend! It was the best!

The following morning, we departed early to catch our flight to Hanoi.

<u>Statistics: Malaysia</u>
Participating Institutions: 16
States Represented: 12
Number of 4-year Colleges: 16
Number of 2-year Colleges: 0
Number of School Fairs: 9
Number of Total Students Seen: 634

VIETNAM (Hai Phong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City): Sept. 27-Oct. 5

We had an interesting, crazy, fun, wild, & productive week in Vietnam that we will never forget. We were cautiously following some typhoons that were in Southeast and East Asia and were forecasted to hit Northern Vietnam right when we were arriving. Fortunately, when we arrived, the weather was sunny and perfect and we arrived safely at our hotel in the afternoon. The next day was Sunday and we all enjoyed the day off.

On Monday, we departed for a new high school that we have never visited before in Hanoi and had a fantastic fair. The students were eager to learn more and the staff were all amazing! We left the school and departed for Hai Phong. We had one great fair at the biggest international school there, dropped off materials at another school, and visited a brand-new school for a tour.

We enjoyed listening to each other's music on the long drive back to Hanoi, which has now become a yearly tradition.

The following day was very rainy, but we departed on schedule and had a full day planned – 5 school fairs and a counselor dinner. Our first school fair was perfect and busy. The second school was complete chaos as over 250 students were waiting for us in the auditorium and the group set up super-fast to talk with as many as we could for our allotted time. On our way to the third school, the weather was getting bad and I received messages from the other schools that they had to cancel the fairs, as they had to cancel school due to the storm and rain. Since we were close by the third school, we visited with the counselor briefly and made our way back to the hotel. The rain was pouring down and the streets were completely flooded with some streets flooding nearly 3 feet in water. Fortunately, we were in a large bus with high clearance and our driver was incredible. We slowly but safely made it back to the hotel and everyone was ok. We had to cancel the dinner with counselors, but since the restaurant was in our hotel, we had dinner together and waited out the storm. We found out that it was the worst typhoon since 2007. We were all grateful to be safe and ok, because many people in Northern Vietnam were not so lucky.

Since the schools were canceled in Hanoi, we put together boxes of everyone's materials to ship to each of the schools that had to cancel due to the weather. It was unfortunate to not be able to have the fairs, but we made the best of the situation as we could. Everyone was so positive and adjusted quite well despite the crazy typhoon. We checked out of the hotel in the late afternoon and thankfully, were able to fly to Ho Chi Minh City that night.

The weather in Ho Chi Minh City was much better and we had 7 school fairs over two days. Two of the fairs were huge fairs that lasted for a few hours and several hundred students and parents attended. The rest of the visits were great as well and it was a busy and productive two days. On our last night, we had a great counselor dinner at the second-best buffet in the world (The Sheraton) and 8 counselors attended. We all had a great time together!

We all enjoyed the Saturday off and ended the day with a group dinner at a nearby Michelin-rated Vietnamese restaurant and nearly everyone joined. Vietnam was a wonderful time and the group was so great! We experienced a lot this week, but I couldn't have imagined a better group to experience it with.

Most of the group departed on Sunday to go their various ways and those remaining on the tour flew to Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

<u>Statistics: Vietnam</u>
Participating Institutions: 22
States Represented: 18

Number of 4-year Colleges: 20
Number of 2-year Colleges: 2
Number of School Fairs: 14 (with 2 visits to drop off materials and a short meet & greet, 1 school tour, and 5 cancelations due to the typhoon)
Number of Total Students Seen: 1,113

CAMBODIA: Phnom Penh (Oct. 5-7)
Due to a long flight delay, we didn't arrive in Phnom Penh until late at night. We quickly checked in at the hotel to get some rest, because we had to leave at 7:00am the following morning for a very long and productive day! We had 5 school fairs and a stop at the famous David's Restaurant Homemade Noodles for lunch. The first 2 fairs were very busy with every upper classman attending. The afternoon visits were not as busy, but the schools were still grateful that we attended. That night, we had a counselor dinner and 14 counselors attended – our largest group ever in Phnom Penh!

The following day, we checked out and departed for 4 school fairs. The first 3 fairs were very busy and the last visit wasn't very busy, but it worked out perfectly as we had to leave early to catch our flight to Singapore. Phnom Penh just barely opened a new airport that is much farther from the city, but it is one of the most beautiful airports in the world!

We arrived safely in Singapore late at night and checked into the hotel.

<u>Statistics: Cambodia</u>
Participating Institutions: 7
States Represented: 6
Number of 4-year Colleges: 6
Number of 2-year Colleges: 1
Number of School Fairs: 9
Number of Total Students Seen: 471

SINGAPORE & JOHOR BAHRU, MALAYSIA: (Oct. 7-9)
For our last day on the tour, we visited 2 countries. We left early in the morning to drive across the border to Johor Bahru, Malaysia and had a fair at a great international school. The drive was less than an hour and it worked out so well! We returned to Singapore for 2 more visits in the afternoon. The first visit was slow, but it was great to connect with the school counselor who is eager to push the universities to the students. At the second school, we had a great after-school fair and the students that participated were wonderful.

To end off the tour, we had a final dinner together with counselors at the Marina Bay Sands buffet and we had 5 counselors joined us! It was a fun group and a perfect end to an amazing tour!

Statistics: Singapore
Participating Institutions: 6
States Represented: 5
Number of 4-year Colleges: 6
Number of 2-year Colleges: 0
Number of School Fairs: 3
Number of Total Students Seen: 62

FINAL THOUGHTS

For me, the tours always fly by so fast. They say that "Time flies when you are having fun", but these tours don't just fly by, they go screaming by haha. So that must mean we are having loads of fun. The Southeast Asia Tour had it all! Great weather, crazy weather, strikes, floods, amazing food, fun memories, lots of laughs, our largest counselor dinners ever, screen golf, escape rooms, long nights of work in the lounges, late night arrivals, early morning departures, and the very best group of people that I could ever imagine traveling with. Everyone was incredible and worked so hard and well with each other!

I try to plan the most effective and affordable tour possible for everyone with a wide range of schools in areas in SE Asia that are eager to learn more about studying in the USA and that can afford attending. The markets in SE Asia continue to be strong and the interest is still high among the students and parents.

I am very proud of everyone that traveled on the tour. The group worked so hard, showed up on time, were professional and represented their institutions so well. There were some things out of our control and we all handled them so well. We had a tour full of true professionals and it was an honor to be a part of it. Thank you!

Next year is AEO Tour's 40th Anniversary and there will be some special discounts for returning AEO Fam - as well as some pretty nice swag! Continue to dominate this Fall and I wish you best in all that you do!

Thank you so much for joining the tour this Fall! I love ya and hope to see you soon!

-Tour Helper Man
Ben