



St Leonard's College

Big Experience 2018 Thailand, Laos and Cambodia: A Journey of Contrasts



This Big Experience will enhance the elements of the CUE program, giving students the opportunity to gain a true perspective of their place in the world and inspire them to want to make a difference. As students journey through three of Asia's most geographically and culturally diverse countries, they will inhale the rich history and interact with cultures very different to our own. Some of the highlights will include a gourmet cooking class, Thai boxing, white water rafting, learning to bargain like a local, song and dance performance during cultural exchanges, visiting breathtaking waterfalls and gaining insight into the challenges these nations have overcome.



The trip starts in northern Thailand in the highland city of Chiang Mai before students participate in a 3 day building project in the hill tribe region of Chiang Dao. Here they will become familiar with village life and participate in the local traditions of the tribe. The journey continues on to the Chiang Rai region which lies in the heart of the famous 'Golden Triangle'. An essential stop while in this part of the country is a visit to the Opium Museum. This very impressive building houses interactive displays detailing the history of opium and the impact of illegal drugs.



After crossing the border into Laos, students will travel along the Mekong River by long boat for two days. A visit to the Pak Ou caves where thousands of Buddha figures are stored will promote interest into the meaning and an appreciation for the religion. Further down the river students arrive at the UNESCO World Heritage listed town of Luang Prabang, in Laos. To appreciate the beauty, a climb up Mount Phu Si will reveal panoramic views of the town and surrounding hinterland that will be the site of the Great Race. Students will explore the town and learn of its history, culture and transformation from a Kingdom to a Socialist Republic. Visit a remote waterfall before enjoying a traditional 'Baci' dinner accompanied by Laotian folk dancing.



After a short flight students arrive at Siem Reap in Cambodia. Venture out to explore the world famous Angkor Temple complex, beginning with the Bayon Temple and the Ta Prohm Temple (jungle temple) as seen in the film 'Tomb Raider'. Visit the most impressive of all the temples - Angkor Wat and get lost in Preah Khan (maze temple). Additional interaction with local communities exist with a rural school visit and a visit to the Tonle Sap Lake village. Students will gain insight into the day to day struggles of children trying to build a future in one of the poorest countries in the world. The value of bringing about happiness via the simplest of things will be observed and will penetrate the souls of our students.



A visit to the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng Prison in Phnom Penh serves as a reminder of Cambodia's tragic history during the Khmer Rouge reign.



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Travel

The group will fly to Chiang Mai with Thai Airways via Bangkok and to Siem Reap with Lao Aviation Airlines. Other modes of transportation include a modern air-conditioned coach, bicycles, and a long tail boat.

Accommodation

Accommodation on this experience will be mostly in 3 star hotels with air-conditioning and good facilities. Students will share rooms, two students per room. Whilst in the village, facilities are very basic and students stay in a long-house, dormitory style.

Cost

This year a deposit of \$2500 was included in the year 9 term fee statement for the Big Experience. The balance for this trip will be in the range of \$2050-\$2350 with the exact amount being confirmed in a letter once final numbers are in. The final amount owing will be added to your term fee account. This is fully inclusive of accommodation, tours, insurance, taxes, visas, transportation and all breakfast, some lunches and most dinners. **Students will need a current passport with at least six months validity after the return date.**

Planned itinerary

Flight from Melbourne to Chiang Mai (via Bangkok), Thailand.

Day 1 Arrive in Chiang Mai. Explore the city and take a Thai cooking class.

Day 2 Action packed day with an early morning Thai boxing class, white water rafting in the afternoon and visit to the night market in the evening.

Day 3 Visit an eco-village, home to the minority Long Neck Karen hill tribe. Take an electric car to the summit of Doi Su Thep hill before descending the dragon staircase.

Days 4 and 5 Travel to hill tribe region of Chiang Dao. Spend 2 nights in the village and embark on a building project, constructing a small house. Tasks to include brick laying, cement mixing, basic carpentry and landscaping.

Day 6 Depart Chiang Dao after presenting the finished house to a local family and travel north to Chiang Rai, travel around the city and visit the night market.

Day 7 Journey to the furthest northern province, Chiang Khong to visit the Golden Triangle area and Opium museum.

Day 8 Cross the border into Laos and board our private boat travelling along the Mekong River to Pak Beng. En route stop to visit minority and very traditional villages.

Day 9 Continue along the Mekong River towards Luang Prabang. Stopping off to visit Pak Ou caves and learn the impact of Buddhism.

Days 10 and 11 Explore Luang Prabang. Visit beautiful temples, climb Mount Phu Si to reveal panoramic views, travel to a picturesque waterfall, visit an elephant conservation and protection centre, join in the dancing during a traditional Baci celebration. This is also the site for the 'Great Race'.

Day 12 Take a short flight to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Explore the town and roam around the market precinct.

Day 13 Spend the day visiting the world famous Angkor Wat Temples before an evening walking tour of the city's central district.

Day 14 Siem Reap: Visit a rural school giving young students the opportunity to practise their English before interacting with the students' families. Boat trip to the Tonle Sap Lake visiting floating fishing villages.

Day 15 Bus trip to Phnom Penh, Cambodia and stop at local market selling fruit and fried delicacies.

Day 16 Visit the infamous Tuol Sleng Prison and the Killing Fields. Then visit a slum on the outskirts of the city to observe the conditions that thousands of the city's poorest residents endure. An evening Tuk Tuk tour around the city.

Day 17 Royal Palace visit and tour of the Russian Market. Depart for Melbourne in the evening.

Day 18 Arrive in Melbourne early afternoon.

Final details of this Big Experience may be subject to change.



St Leonard's College

Big Experience 2018

Vietnam: Beyond the Brochures



As students journey through Vietnam and experience the many fascinating delights this country has to offer, they will deepen the connections made in the CUE program. The impact of this Big Experience lies in the history and culture. Students gain insight into Vietnam's turbulent past alongside the rapid and modern changes it is currently undergoing.



In the south students will be introduced to a dynamic metropolis and the powerhouse of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City. There will be a new currency to negotiate, language to try out and a different way to do things; including crossing the road. Students will have the opportunity to crawl through the Cu Chi tunnels, once home to the country's communist guerrillas.



A very unique part of the Vietnam experience will be time spent in the village. A trek through picturesque scenery to Mai Chau in the north, or a boat ride deep into the southern waterways of the Mekong Delta, will provide the location for the community immersion project. Students will participate in practical building and labouring tasks to construct a small house to assist a family in need. During this time they will learn how the local people practice sustainable living, gain genuine understanding of the culture and see how the villagers have adapted to their environment. This will bring an immense sense of perspective and satisfaction for all involved. Our young people may come to realise the lasting benefit of working with others less fortunate than themselves.



Accommodations are in a long house within the northern village or a homestay on a small island nestled in the heart of the Delta.



As the journey moves through Vietnam, there will be many memorable sights and experiences. These include taking an overnight train to Hue and cycling around the historic region. Students will enjoy abseiling to catch the views over the South China Sea and feasting on the uniquely delicious food in the World Heritage Site of Hoi An. They will explore markets, ruins, pagodas and temples. They will get the opportunity to be winners as they independently navigate around vibrant streetscapes during the 'Great Race'.



By the time the journey draws to an end, our students will have experienced the gentle and friendly nature of the Vietnamese people. They will have gained an understanding of the many changes and challenges the Vietnamese have faced and appreciate how one man, Ho Chi Minh, resonates such significance throughout the country. They will inquire about and evaluate Australia's role in fostering relationships within Asia.

The trip to Vietnam will give students an opportunity to experience a culture very different from their own. They will return home more independent, with stories to tell and memories to last a lifetime.



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Big Experience 2018

Vietnam: Beyond the Brochures

Travel

The group will fly with Vietnam Airlines. In country, there will be various modes of transport – buses, overnight train, boat, and plane. Bicycles and cyclos round off the transport experience. There is one internal flight between Danang and Ho Chi Minh City.

Accommodation

Most of the accommodation will be in comfortable hotels, of approximately a 3 star standard. When involved in the community project in the village, students stay long rooms, dormitory style in the north or in a homestay/hostel in the south. Toilets and showers are basic and often don't have hot water. Mosquito nets will always be provided during the village stay. There is one overnight train journey in 4-berth soft sleepers.

Cost

This year a deposit of \$2500 was included in the year 9 term fee statement for the Big Experience. The balance for this trip will be in the range of \$1700-\$2000 with the exact amount being confirmed in a letter once final numbers are in. The final amount owing will be added to your term fee account. This is fully inclusive of accommodation, tours, insurance, taxes, visas, transportation and all breakfast, some lunches and most dinners. **Students will need a current passport with at least six months validity after the return date.**

Planned itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Ho Chi Minh, meet our tour leader and transfer to hotel for a full briefing of the tour. We enjoy our first Vietnamese dinner.

Day 2 The sights of Ho Chi Minh including the dynamic China town, the bustling local "wet" market and the sobering War Remnants Museum. Enjoy a "Great Race" around the city.

Day 3 Day trip to Cu Chi tunnels. When we return we have time for some independent exploration of Ho Chi Minh.

Day 4 Travel south by private boat to the Mekong Delta to begin to understand life on the river. Arrive at a village Homestay where we will spend the coming days building a dwelling for an impoverished family. In the afternoon we complete a cycling tour of the local villages and visit local schools to get to understand the education system in Vietnam.

Days 5 and 6 Mekong Delta - The next days are spent building a dwelling for an underprivileged family. Staying in the Homestay, we get to know the village community.

Day 7 Put the finishing touches on the building project and have a short handover ceremony. We begin our journey back by boat and venture through the floating markets to look at cottage industries and productions that have been successful for centuries. We stop for the night in Vinh Long Province and experience a local family home stay.

Day 8 We return to Ho Chi Minh with time to relax and explore the city's vibrant districts and markets. After dinner we visit the local night market and then indulge in one of Vietnam's favorite pastimes - Karaoke.

Day 9 Plane flight to Danang then bus to Hoi An. On the way to Hoi An, visit Marble Mountain for some abseiling, taking in the views of South China Beach.

Days 10 and 11 Explore the World Heritage Site, taking in the French colonial architecture. We will cycle to the beach, traverse rice fields and get some tailor made new threads. We will enjoy a hands on cooking class and also learn about Hoi An's rich history.

Days 12 and 13 We travel to Hue by bus. Once there we bicycle ride around the city, taking in the Dong BA market, ruins of the Imperial Citadel and the famous Thien Mu Pagoda. We visit the intriguing tombs of the Nguyen Emperors.

Day 14 After a bicycle ride through the countryside in Hue, we prepare for our evening on the Reunification express, an overnight train that takes us north to Hanoi.

Day 15 We arrive in Hanoi and take to the streets of Hanoi on cyclos as we explore the lakes district. Infamous water puppet show in the evening.

Day 16 The sights of Hanoi, including Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, the One Pillar Pagoda, and the Old Quarter.

Day 17 Visit the famous Hanoi Hilton prison. Enjoy lunch at KOTO restaurant, non-profit organisation that trains disadvantaged teens for the hospitality industry. We visit the Australian Embassy in Hanoi. Tonight we depart Hanoi for our return journey home.

Day 18 Arrive in Melbourne early morning.

Final details of this Big Experience may be subject to change. If two or more groups are required the order of activities changes from north to south and includes an immersion project in a village in Mai Chau.



St Leonard's College

Big Experience 2018

China: Ancient and Contemporary



China is a Big Experience destination because of its importance in the region and to Australia's future prosperity. China is home to almost 20 percent of the world's population, 1.4 billion people, making it the most populated nation on earth. Students will gain an awareness of the diverse cultures and living standards that exist within and the consequences of rapid economic growth. The China Big Experience models and extends the elements of the CUE program most successfully.



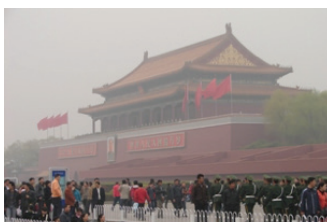
The trip starts in Chengdu, the 'green city' where students will get a spicy taste of culture. They will also get hands on by participating in the Panda Breeding Centre's enrichment program and visit one of China's oldest Buddhist Temples.



Students will immerse themselves in a Miao Village community in Kaili. This region is famous for being the birthplace of some of China's ethnic minorities. It is a very special privilege to be welcomed by these private and very traditional villages as they slowly open up to the rest of the world. Students will undertake a service project to assist the local people, engage in the scholastic program and learn the ways of life in this region. Another opportunity to create connections exists during a visit to the Huilin Community Centre for people with learning disabilities. Our students will play sport, sing and dance.



A visit to the Terracotta Warriors in Xian will please the curious and the opportunity to view this city with a bike ride along the high city walls will please the adventurous. Students will witness the old versus the new China as they stand on the Bund in Shanghai and gaze at the European Concessions and across the river at the futuristic skyline. Here, students will gain an appreciation of the formidable Chinese trade and commerce industry. This is also the scene for the 'Great Race'. Students will navigate public transport and undertake challenges and tasks to claim the glory of the winning team. Encountering the modern cityscapes alongside the ancient and sacred is the Beijing experience. With visits to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, students will come to understand the country's significant and relevant history.



The trip to China will enable students to experience a culture different from their own. China is one of the major drivers of global economic growth and one of Australia's major trading partners. It is at the centre of environmental sustainability issues currently facing our planet. Our students will develop an appreciation for what this means to them and for the generations that follow.





St Leonard's College

Big Experience 2018

China: Ancient and Contemporary

Travel

The group will fly to Chengdu via Singapore and return to Melbourne from Beijing via Singapore with Singapore Airways. In China, there will be various modes of transport – bus, bullet trains, overnight trains, boat, rickshaw and plane. All internal flights will be with China Eastern Airlines.

Accommodation

The accommodation will be in comfortable hotels, of approximately 3 star standard. In the village it is dormitory style lodging and the overnight train is a 4-berth cabin.

Cost

This year a deposit of \$2500 was included in the year 9 term fee statement for the Big Experience. The balance for this trip will be in the range of \$3700-\$4100 with the exact amount being confirmed in a letter once final numbers are in. The final amount owing will be added to your term fee account. This is fully inclusive of most meals, accommodation, tours, insurance, taxes, visas and transportation. Visas for Australian and New Zealand passport holders is included in the tour fare, but there may be an extra charge for holders of passports from other countries. **Students will need a current passport with at least six months validity after the return date.**

Planned itinerary

Day 1 Flight – Melbourne to Chengdu via Singapore. Meet tour operator and transfer to hotel for a welcome dinner.

Day 2 Explore the beautiful city of Chengdu, taking in the Main Temple, Peoples Park and the Ancient Street.

Day 3 Take a Day trip to Leshan, visiting the World Heritage listed Giant Buddha, view the statue from a boat cruise on the river before climbing to the top of the structure.

Days 4 Visit to the Dujiangyan Panda Breeding Centre to volunteer as part of the Panda enrichment program.

Day 5 Take the bullet train to Guiyang, enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before boarding a bus to travel to the ethnic minority Miao and Yao village.

Day 6 and 7 The next days are spent immersing in the Miao Village community. We will participate in English lessons and sporting activities with students from a local Primary school, along with projects aimed to improve the school environment.

Days 8 We wake early in the morning, before flying to Xian. We take a walk around this exciting city before our evening meal.

Day 9 Xian – traditional starting point of the Silk Road. Engage in a range of activities such as sport, dancing, singing and cooking at the Huilin Community Centre for people with learning disabilities. Return to the city for a walking tour of the Muslim Quarter.

Day 10 Visit to the tombs of the Terracotta Warriors. Overnight train to Shanghai.

Day 11 and 12 Full days of exploration of Shanghai. 'Great Race' on foot and using public transport. In groups, with a teacher and a Chinese guide, navigate your way to places of interest. Visit the Shanghai Museum, Take a river ferry to Pudong, see the sunset at Shanghai tower and walk along Nanjing East Road.

Day 13 Take a bullet Train to Beijing. In the afternoon spend time orienting yourself in this famous city.

Day 14 Exploration of this wonder of the orient includes visits to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and Zhongshan Park. The afternoon will include a famous Chinese acrobat show.

Day 15 Hike the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall of China and admire this remarkable piece of engineering.

Day 16 Visit the Lama Temple and meet with the Monks to learn about Buddhism. Wander around the famous Hutongs.

Day 17 Visit Jingshan Park and the Temple of Heaven, then board our flight back to Melbourne via Bangkok.

Day 18 Arrive in Melbourne in the afternoon.

Final details of this Big Experience may be subject to change. If there are two groups, the order of activities may be altered.



St Leonard's College

Big Experience 2018

Australia: People, Culture and Country



This journey will deepen students' connections to the themes of the CUE program as they experience many of the fascinating delights this country has to offer. The impact of this Big Experience lies not just in the environmental and historical experiences students will have, but also in the greater appreciation and better understanding of the unique indigenous culture of this country.



Beginning in Darwin, students will have a day to explore the history of our northern most capital city. They will spend another couple of days in Darwin at the end of their Arnhem Land adventure. Students will drive to East Alligator River, which will be their base for the next 3-4 days. During this time, they will explore the incredible landscapes of Kakadu and Arnhem Land. Day trips to Jim Jim Falls, Gunbalanya and Injalak Hill, Cooida and Yellow Water. Arts Centres will be visited and students will have the opportunity to purchase local art at non-commercial prices.



They will then travel deep into Arnhem Land to Maningrida where they will spend the next 4 days completely immersed in school and community life. They will experience all aspects of life in a remote indigenous community. It is a beautiful community with many in the community still maintaining traditional ways. During this time, students will take part in a variety of traditional and cultural activities like basket weaving and traditional story telling. Our students will also engage closely with the students in the school. On occasions, they will be able to assist in their learning environment with English and Maths tasks.



Students will have opportunities to explore Katherine and the surrounds. Taking in the beauty of Katherine, exploring the town and surrounds, including the small pastoral town of Mataranka. Made famous by the novel *We of the Never Never* and renowned for its sandy-bottomed thermal pool.



On their way back to Darwin they will hike to one of the beautiful waterfalls in Litchfield National Park. Once back in Darwin they will discover the many sights and historical places in the region.



A highlight of this trip will be the boat cruise to the Tiwi Islands - a time to explore this beautiful indigenous community and see the spectacular animal and plant life that abounds.



St Leonard's College

Big Experience 2018

Australia: People, Culture and Country

Travel

The group will travel to Darwin on Qantas or Virgin Airlines. There will be various modes of transport – buses, and boats. Bicycles round off the transport experience.

Accommodation

Some of the accommodation will be in comfortable hotels, of approximately a 3 star standard. In Maningrida students will be sleeping in air conditioned quarters close to the school.

Cost

This year a deposit of \$2500 was included in the year 9 term 2 fee statement for the Big Experience. The balance for this trip will be in the range of \$900-\$1100 with the exact amount being confirmed in a letter once final numbers are in. The final amount owing will be added to the term 3 account. This is fully inclusive of most meals, accommodation, tours, insurance and transportation.

Planned itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Darwin, transfer to hotel for a full briefing of the tour. Tour through the coastal suburb of Mindil and experience the legendary night markets.

Day 2 Explore Darwin CBD. Tour around on bikes visiting significant sites such as MAGNT - the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Visit the Defence of Darwin exhibit, telling the story of the bombing of Darwin in 1942.

Days 3- 5 Drive to Kakadu National Park. Basing ourselves at East Alligator River, we spend days exploring the National Park – taking in Jim Jim falls, the Yellow River tour and spotting amazing bird life and crocodiles.

Day 6 Visit the Gunbalanya school, Injalak Arts centre and amazing bush walks in the area.

Days 7-10 Drive deep into East Arnhem Land and visit the Maningrida school. Here we will be spending time with the students of the school assisting in their classes, engaging in their sporting programs. We will also meet with the elders and traditional owners of the land. We will experience story time and learn more about traditional hunting and gathering practices.

Day 11 After farewelling our new friends at Maningrida school we will explore further into Arnhem Land and take the central highway to Bulman a small cattle station town where we might see buffalo.

Day 12 Bus to Katherine, along the way explore the Mary River region.

Day 13 Explore Katherine Gorge on kayaks with a local ranger, then visit the Mataranka thermal springs.

Day 14 Drive to Litchfield National Park. Walk to some of the most beautiful waterholes in the world. Travel by bus to Darwin. Tour the waterfront areas of this city. Visit the lifeguarded waterpark.

Day 15 Great race around Darwin.

Day 16 We take a Cruise to the Tiwi Islands and find out why they are nicknamed the 'Island of Smiles'. The islands offer aboriginal art, excellent fishing and plants and animals found nowhere else in the world.

Day 17 We wake up in the morning, say our farewells and head to Darwin airport for flight back to Melbourne.

Final details of this Big Experience may be subject to change.