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LAO PDR-VIETNAM TRIP

1st day of CLMV trip to Lao PDR and Vietnam : 8 July 2019

Today, I had to get up early to the airport. I was getting ready and making sure everything I needed for the trip was in the luggage. Unfortunately, my luggage is a little small. So, I tried as much as I could to stick everything inside. It was such an exhausting packing. I had to arrange everything and send the package via line man to my friend. It was such a rush morning because no taxi came around. At least, I arrived by 7 A.M. and the flight did not leave until 8.30 A.M. We arrived at Nakhon Phanom Airport. The first thing that surprised me was how small the airport is and we landed right in front of the airport and took the stairs down like we had our own private jet. We waited for our bags. Some people went to the toilets. Another impressive thing is the toilets are pretty clean and nice. There was an inspection officer came to ask a question about how we felt about the toilets. We took the vans and went to Savan-Seno Special Economic Zone. First time that I heard the name “Seno”, why it has to sound like “Say No”. Before the presentation, I honestly had no idea about this special economic zone at all. Then, I have acknowledged some information from this welcoming meeting that Savan SENO Special Economic zone is in Savannakhet province in Lao PDR. It is the zone that is an ideally central hub for investment, trade, and services, located along the East-West Corridor (EWEC), which links Thailand, Lao PDR, and Vietnam (Route No. 9). On this trip, we would be traveling through this route. I have learned that Lao PDR has tried to promote business sector in SEZA through *Export-oriented processing*, which includes agricultural and food processing, copper, wood based production (i.e. Automotive, electronic parts, and furniture), auto, motorcycle assembling, garment and textile, shoes, and bag production etc., *Services*, which include tourism, banking, financial and insurance, logistics and distributions, International hospital and school, entertainment centre, seminar and training centre, hotels and spas, and restaurant etc., and *Trading*, which includes duty free, re-export, wholesales, exhibitions, and department stores etc. The strengths of SEZA that would attract the investors to invest here are

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Political and economic stability, Strategic geographical location, Rich Natural Resources (i.e. Copper, Gypsum, etc.), No natural disasters, Generous tax incentives, Stable and low cost electricity supply, Special privileges on export (GSP from 42 countries and NTR by USA). From the presentation, it showed various attractive reasons for investors to come to invest in SEZA. There are investors from Thailand, Japan, Malay have already come to invest in SEZA, which have been divided into zones, such as A1 for Thai investors, B1 for Japanese investors, and C for Malaysian investors etc. Moreover, they have been trying to promote this special ecumenic zone to be “One Stop Service Centre”—operation centre for acquisition of Investment Licenses, Enterprise registrations, Company Seals, Import-export permits, Stay permits, Visa, etc. Human Resource is one of the factors that they are concerned in order to improve the capabilities of workers. Therefore, they have been educating people and trying to improve them. We went to see factories in the area. However, I think this is still the beginning stage for SEZA because there wasn't any outstanding change or something so advanced to really capture my attention. However, I have seen that if they are continuously promoting the business activities in SEZA and due to its comparative advantage s as mentioned, there is a high potential that this economic zone would be developed into one of important economic zones, which generates income for both locals and foreigners in neighbouring counties. I think they still need to improve human capital and their language skills quite a lot. After presentation, I was amazed by how much the presenter could speak Thai because he is a Laotian. The language and the letters also look quite similar to Thai language and Thai letters. So, I could guess from the signs, tags, and billboards, etc. what were written on them. In the evening, we checked in at Savan Hotel, which had the casino on the first floor. It was the first time I saw a casino with my own eyes. People were staring at us because we were in our uniforms. After I got the car, I went upstairs with my next 7 -day roommate named Parn. The hallway was pretty long walk. It was like a maze. The first hotel started pretty nice. I hoped that the next would be even nicer. I was so tired that night because I did not get much sleep on the Sunday's night. I went to

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shower and went straight to bed. I did not think that Parn would turn to be my alarm clock for the next days of the entire trip.

2nd day of CLMV trip to Lao PDR and Vietnam : 9 July 2019

We woke up quite early because girls take a lot of time to get ready. We came downstairs at 7.30 A.M. for breakfast and the meeting was at 8.00 A.M. The breakfast was okay. I had some bacons and other things, which I totally already forgot what they were. We left the hotels by vans and arrived at Lao PDR-Viatnam border. I did not imagine how how it would be. I came out from the van and went to the toilets with my friends. The first least impressive thing of the trip was the toilets because they were super dirty and I had to face to the wall, which there was a window that was half opened. I was speechless. After my friends used the toilets, the toilets at the border had turned to be the topic we discussed the entire trip. I made me afraid to use toilets in Vietnam. However, I just tried to think positively that it might be because these toilets are at thee border. Then, we stopped at next toilets at a gas station. Oh gosh, they looked the same just a little better that they were cleaner and no window opened. We'd already crossed the border by the way. There was a Vietnamese tour guide, who would be with us the entire trip and everywhere we went. Surprisingly, his Thai is pretty amazing. But I felt so sorry for my exchange student friends that they would not understand anything much. For the next couple days, I had become their translator since we were at Lao PDR. On this day, we went to Vinh Mom Tunnel and Domilitized Zone. What amazed me the most of this day was the tunnel that Vietnamese people in the past used it as their home in order to avoid American soldiers unless they would be killed if they were spotted. I made me realize how lucky Thai people at that time and how lucky I am that we did not need to go through all these experience. The tunnel is quite narrow and short in height. I went inside with my friends and our tour guide. Our guide could walk through easily because he is a pretty small guy. But it was quite difficult for Ajarn Anin to walk through since he is so tall. The guide told us about how people lived in this tunnel. I got to know that there were babies were born in the tunnel and

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family members of these Vietnamese refugees had to send their family members to live with other families in other parts of the tunnel, just in case there were bombs so that there would be someone survive to carry one their family names. It sounded pretty sorrowful and was hard to picture what these people had gone through. Wars only bring pain and suffer. It has made me appreciate that I was born to be Thai. We are so lucky in many things. Out of two places we visited today. I only recalled my feelings towards Vinh tunnel only because it was super interesting and sad to imagine how Vietnamese people in war time wen through. In the evening, we checked in at Sepon Boutique. I liked the room. But the air conditioner was a little too hot. We also had to walk to the 2nd floor to get to the room, carrying our luggage. Luckily, mine wasn't so heavy. I sweated a lot and it made me realise how much Vietnam is hotter than Thailand. The food at the beach was not so nice. I did not like it much. So, I would end my essay of the 2nd here.

3rd day of CLMV trip to Lao PDR and Vietnam : 10 July 2019

We left Dong Ha at around 9.00 A.M. to Hue. We visited C.P. Vietnam in the morning. They welcomed us very well. We listened to the presentation about C.P. corporation; how it produces animal feeds, technological tools used in productions, how C.P. raises shrimps and how shrimp farms are operated. C.P. has its own academic teams and engineer teams to improve its productions and technologies. It has a comparative advantages in terms of lower costs of productions and advanced technologies. Due to the good reputation of C.P., many clients have trusted and ordered products from them. The presentation showed the locations of C.P. shrimp farms and factories. The farms are in Qung Binh, Hue, ..etc. C.P. has already acquired many food safety certifications, such as BRC (for Europe), Global GAP(USA), HALAL (for Islamic countries). Due to C.P.'s teams and technologies, it has high potential and influence toward local SMEs that is these SMEs are also attracted to do business with C.P. Vietnam. We went to see the process of shrimp production. It was such unfortunate that we were not allowed to take any photos due to the company's confidentiality. There were 5 procedures if I recalled, which 1st procedure, workers there would choose the right

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sizes of shrimps and eliminate the smaller ones to the baskets, then passed the qualified size ones on to the rails, 2nd procedure was to clean shrimps, 3rd procedure is Boiling or Freezing, and 4th procedure is Quality Control process, and 5th procedure Packaging and Labelling. It was my first time seeing the factory work. I have known that 99% of the shrimp products is for exporting and 1% is for local consumption. It was quite intimidating to think how local business in the food production would be able to compete C.P. corporation because C.P. has advanced machinery, good human capital, financial capital, and knowledge of what they are doing very well. They have very well-process production and system, such as separating tasks of workers by their hat colours. C.P. Vietnam also has very good quality control to ensure that their products would be well-standardised. It has been such a great opportunity to see their business progress. For coffee break, we got to try some shrimp menus, such as deep fried soft shell shrimps and sushi shrimps. They tasted so amazing. I ate many of them because I love shrimp so much that I used to tell my friends that if this world had no other food but shrimps, I would be able to survive. We finished our break and went back into conference room for Q&A. Then, we came out to take group picture and went on our way to Royal Tomb.



We visited Royal Tomb of Khai Dinh King and old and the old palace. My group members got to film some videos and took some photos for our presentations. It was interesting to see Vietnamese architecture, which looks quite similar to Chinese's. We had a lunch later. I did not like the lunch much

again because I like spicy food. I guessed that the next 5-6 days, I would be missing Thai food surely. Luckily, shrimps from C.P. Vietnam helped me survive until evening, which we had pizza and spaghetti for dinner. We checked in at Alba Spa Hotel. The 3rd hotel was pretty nice. I liked the way the room was decorated with some bamboo furniture and dishes on the wall. The baht room was pretty amazing and the bed was comfortable. I went to bed early again on the day because it was so exhausting to have to wake up early everyday.

4th day of CLMV trip to Lao PDR and Vietnam : 11 July 2019

Today was a traveling day. We spent most of the time on the bus. I forgot to mention earlier that we changed from the vans to the bus at Lao PDR-Vietnam border. We left Hue to travel to Da Nang. We went to the mall, which there was nothing much that could capture my attention. My group members and I went to observe behaviour of Vietnamese consumers. They did some shoppings for groceries or accessories like Thais. Fashions in Vietnam have less variety than Thailand. There was nothing that I really liked. But one thing that satisfied me was everything in Vietnam seems to be a little cheaper than Thailand. We checked in at Satya Danang Hotel around 3 P.M. From the original plan, we were supposed to meet CEO from Chance and Challenge Co.,Ltd. but our meeting got cancelled due to some reason. So, professors assigned us to go shopping at the local market and buy something to represent Vietnam and prepare information and products for next Monday presentation. My group bought a doll wearing traditional Vietnamese custom, mirror, a tricycle with a man cycling it for a phone station, a magnet, a Vietnamese hat, and a hand fan, which each member chose one product for his/her own. The product I chose was a doll. We were searching for a Vietnamese custom and found that Vietnamese sellers at that local market were very pushy. I went in to ask for a custom but then decided not to get it. Then, that seller seemed to be a little angry and mumble something to herself in Vietnamese language. I could guess it was about us because we did not buy her costume. This is one of the things I don't quite enjoy my experiences. I do not like pushy sellers. They all there seemed to want to sell their products too much, even though, it was understandable that they wanted to earn the money. We came back at the hotel. The bathroom was pretty showing out. Parn had to look away while I showered and I had to do the same for her as well. However, from overall, I love this hotel because the room is decorated with a modern style and the beds are very comfy.

5th day of CLMV trip to Lao PDR and Vietnam : 12 July 2019

Unfortunately, we were cancelled again by Da Nang University of Economics as they did not reply our professor's emails at all. So, we went to the famous temple in Da Nang instead. It was a very hot day. I sweated a lot. I wished we did not go there first because it made me feel very tired in the afternoon when we went to SCG meeting. SCG has just invested in Vietnam not a long ago (approx. 2 years). The reason they invested here is because there is still the large share of cement business and potential to grow. Vietnam's economy is growing in double size of Thailand's, which it is a great opportunity to invest. Also, due to some excess demands of cement in the regions throughout Vietnam, SCG has foreseen its potential to expand the business and compete with competitors in the same business. SCG has tried to build its reputation as a leading cement professor, which stated the brand's position outstandingly. It also produces various kinds of construction products, such as toilets, tubs, etc. beside cement. SCG has its engineering and academic teams to inspect and develop technologies in its machinery and process to become even more advanced and environmentally friendly. I commonly hear about SCG in Thailand. However, SCG is still new to Vietnamese. However, due to product development. This shows that SCG has planned their business strategies in advance always. It can be concluded that in order to be the best in what you do. You need to gather information, practice, and always plan ahead. Having a good team is also very important because in reality in working, people go to work and have to collaborate with others. So, knowing to work as a team very well is a very crucial skill for everyone to have.

In the evening, we travelled to Hoi An. The hotel we checked in here is called Royal Riverside Hoi An Hotel. Hoi An is very nice town. It is an ancient, which has been decorated very well. There are many good-looking hotels. This town seems very touristic. I saw a lot of European tourists, Chinese, Korean, and Thai tourists. The buildings are so antique and give the feelings for old-fashioned style. The restaurant we went after we got the money from the professors was pretty nice.

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I ordered steamed park with soy sauce. It was the first nice meal I chose it myself and it turned out to taste pretty good. We were chatting, joking, and laughing together. After that, we went out and walked around to see things. There was nothing much to buy because the products were pretty similar to what we can find in Thailand. However, the place was so nice and the surroundings were pretty romantic to forget.

6th day of CLMV trip to Lao PDR and Vietnam : 13 July 2019

We changed to do to Ba Na Hills today instead. We left the hotel early in the morning to travel there. It was a hot day again. Today, we could wear whatever we wanted. Ba Na Hills has been built on the mountains. The most exciting part that I really like is when we had to take the cable car to

the top, which is where Ba Na Hills actually is because we felt very excited that

when we would reach the top. I searched on google and found out that the distance

from the group to the top of Ba Na hills is 5.8 km travelled by cable cars only. It

was super cool to imagine how the top of Ba Na Hills would look like and how

much the owner like Sun World group has invested on this project. They has done a marvellous job.

The buildings are very European styles of Architecture. They reminded me of Harry Potter movies.

The weather was so nice. The air was a little cool because we were high up on the mountains. What

I didn't really like much is that the place does not have many interesting and adventurous playthings

in comparison to other theme parks that I used to go. It is almost like the place people come for

pictures and food only. It was such as shame that they did not include more playthings to make it

more fun and more like a theme park. However, from overall, the sceneries were quite gorgeous. Ba

Na Hills is absolutely suitable to be the place for filming movies or taking pictures. The very

outstanding point to visit would be a golden bridge, which has the giant hands,

supporting it. It was pretty crowded. I have realised throughout this trip that most

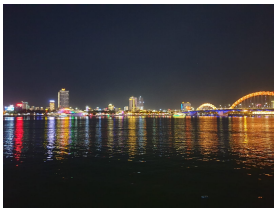
Vietnamese do not say sorry if they hit someone or stepped on someone

accidentally, even though they knew they did and they did not line up in queues to use the toilets.



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This reason makes me not so impressed about Vietnam. On the last night we came back to Da Nang, we went to Korean BBQ, which the food tasted pretty nice but the services were pretty horrible. Later on, my friends and I went on walking touring around the city a little. I found 2 eagles standing on the handrails of the Dragon bridge. It has made me feel so sad and even now that I am mentioning about them. They should be flying in the sky and should not be chained to the handrails like that. Seeing them and not being able to help them break my heart. I just wish people could think and be more sentimental and thoughtful about how the animals would feel before doing something to them more. The city looked very gorgeous that night. It reminded me of many cities like Sydney, Bangkok, San Francisco, and London, etc. as their bridges look like they were built imitating bridges of these cities. But they have one bridge that is super outstanding with its unique design that is the Dragon bridge. I bought a small bag. The seller was very lovely. I would say she



was the first Vietnamese that was super nice to me. She wasn't pushing me to buy her bags and trying so hard to communicate with me, even though, she could not speak English much and could speak only a few Thai words. I admire her effort

and kindness a lot. At least, there is something impressive to remember about Vietnamese people because of this lady who sold a bag to me. The bag was a hand-made. It's very cute and cheap. It was a fun night out with my friends, we went to walk in the market and bought some food and smoothies. So far, it was one of the best day I would remember from this trip.

There is nothing much on the 7th day, 14 July 2019. We just went to Jade store and then to the airport to fly home. I miss my pets already and can't wait to be home.

Answering the questions

What impressed me the most would be the hotels because all six hotels we stayed were pretty good. I love each hotel's decorations.

For Route 9, I think it makes Thailand, Lao PDR, and Vietnam be able to connect to the roadways and makes it easier to travel. If it is easy to travel through the route. The business

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activities can occur such as Hotel business, Tourism business, Logistics for industries and factories like Sawan Seno that has many casinos in the area. The issues that I have seen throughout this trip would be the barrier of language, especially in Vietnam, because no one really spoke English and it was so hard to communicate with Vietnamese because they do not try to guess the body gestures or hand language much.

I think in the next 5-10 years, Laos and Vietnam will become more industrial-based countries and hopefully, the barrier of languages would be reduced. People would be able to speak more English.

For working in Laos or Vietnam, I think I prefer to work in Thailand due to the income, food, culture, and people because I have concluded that I love Thailand even a lot more based on my experiences from this trip. However, the trip was pretty memorable. If I could choose to go again, I would go again absolutely.