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The Journey to Vietnam 2023 – Year 9

Dear Parents,

Next year, we are hoping to once again take students from St John's Grammar School on overseas trips. COVID restrictions have prevented us from traveling overseas on school trips since the beginning of 2020. As current restrictions start to ease, in line with other schools, we want to investigate once again taking our students on overseas trips in 2023.

At this stage, we want to garner expressions of interest for each of the trips in order to investigate the process moving forward. The school will have to follow international travel regulations in regards to vaccination at the time of travel as well as school regulations.

The *Journey to Vietnam* is an opportunity for students when in Year 9 only.

The proposed dates for the 2023 trip are **Saturday 24 June - Saturday 8 July**.

The Journey to Vietnam is special and comes with a proud history for our school. Previous journeys of St John's students and staff have built a legacy of relationship with Vietnam that is there for the next group, post-pandemic, to further shape and strengthen.

Students gain that global perspective, by going away it enables them to look back and see differently, they learn about a different culture, they fund raise beforehand and offer service to those in need, whilst sharing the experience with their peers as they develop bonds and life skills.

The itinerary will see us travel the length of Vietnam, visiting places such as Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), the Mekong Delta in the far south, Hoi An, Hue, Hanoi and the Sapa highlands in the far north.

The service component of the trip will see our students participate in multiple ways, most notably, and also one of the highlights and physically hardest yet rewarding aspects of the journey is the House Building Project. Students will work alongside local builders in assisting to build a house for 2 days in the Mekong region. This experience sees the students work as a team and we get to meet and work with the disadvantaged family that the house is being provided for. It is a reputable cause and such a rewarding experience.

Additionally, students will meet Vietnamese students from the KOTO Restaurant and Training Centre. KOTO, which stands for 'Know One, Teach One', was established by Jimmy Pham to provide training for disadvantaged youth. We sponsor a teen to go through the training centre and hope to continue this support.

Students visit the war remnants museum and Chu Chi tunnels where they learn about the horror and long term impacts of the Vietnam (American) war.

The cultural aspects of the tour include participating in cooking classes, local tours, homestays, museum visits, markets, beach visits and much more. Travel is by air, overnight rail, bus, bike riding and hiking.

Learning to Soar

The cost of the trip is yet to be finalised but will be approximately \$4500. In order to assist parents in meeting this cost students are expected to raise \$500 of this amount themselves, and that will go to the charities and non-profit organisations. This final price will be all inclusive: transport, accommodation, meals and guides. We will travel in the last week of Term 2 and the first week of the school holidays.

The trip is reasonably physically demanding with much bike riding and hiking in tropical conditions.

Experiences like this provide an opportunity for teenagers to see life through the eyes of others and to develop a deeper sense of compassion. The charity work not only provides them with a sense of achievement and satisfaction in helping others but also in the development of caring, socially aware young people, returning with a deeper sense of advocacy for others – not only in Vietnam but globally and back here in Australia.

Students will eventually formally apply to be a part of the journey team, involving written application and possible interview. From there, the team would be assembled in Term 4 this year to begin preparing: team building, learning about the country, travel advice, fundraising, etc.

Please fill out the expression of interest through the Google Form link below to register your interest by the end of week 5. Once we have received the forms back we will arrange further information and answer your questions.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScY-2ORS4Dnh-upO15tl_DjrRne8YMnFO9trw07FQvSV63itQ/viewform?usp=sf link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScY-2ORS4Dnh-upO15tl_DjrRne8YMnFO9trw07FQvSV63itQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Thank you,

Ben Clark
Head of Middle School

