

The 37th START Program (Vietnam)

For around two weeks from February 22nd to March 8th 2017, twenty-four first-year students along with Associate Professor Fuyuko Takita (Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education) and three other supervising faculty members participated in the 37th START program, visiting University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City and its surrounding area.

At USSH, the students attended lectures in English run by USSH faculty members, on topics such as “Vietnamese study”, “Japan-Vietnam relations”, “Vietnamese History”, “War experience”, “Vietnamese Economy Growth”, and “Vietnamese Culture and Society”. While the students were unaccustomed to and struggled at times in creating reports and conversing in English, they were observed participating actively and asking questions during class in order to further their learning.

They also participated in a discussion with USSH Faculty of Japanese Studies students on “What we can do to create world peace”, and through this they exchange ideas and learn about peace together with Vietnamese students of similar age. The students also visited Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment, and had a discussion and presentation in English with students of that university about environmental problems, student life, and other differences between Japan and Vietnam.

Outside of the classroom, students exchanged ideas with students from USSH who accompanied them as they visited a museum of war and history and the Independence Palace (home and workplace of the President of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War). They also met with the members of “Tonichi Club”, an association of Vietnamese students and civilians who are interested in learning about Japan. They also toured ODA projects of JICA, industrial park and Japanese firms, and had the chance to meet and interact with Japanese people living and working in Vietnam. Students who had an interest in working overseas and/or studying abroad in the future asked enthusiastic questions. On top of this, students participated in home visits, visited an orphanage, the Can Gio Mangrove Forest, Cu Chi tunnels, and Aeon Mall. They were able to gain

valuable first-hand knowledge through this contact with Vietnamese nature, history, and economic development.

After arrival, there were many students who expressed anxiety about adapting to the lifestyle, culture and food habits of a foreign country. However, through interacting with the Vietnamese university students, gaining first-hand knowledge that cannot be learnt from textbooks, and experiencing a value system different from that of Japan, students quickly gained confidence in their endeavors.

At the post-study abroad session after returning to Japan, each student gave a short presentation in English about what they had learnt through the program and their future aspirations (student life, future dreams etc.)

The students make use the SNS to keep in touch with the Vietnamese students with whom they had become close friends. Using the experience and knowledge gained through this program and cherishing the bonds made, we expect these students to continue in their personal growth.



Commemorative photo in front of Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica of Saigon



At the “What we can do to create world peace” discussion



Conversing with students from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment



Listening to the explanation of the guide in the Can Gio Mangrove Forest