

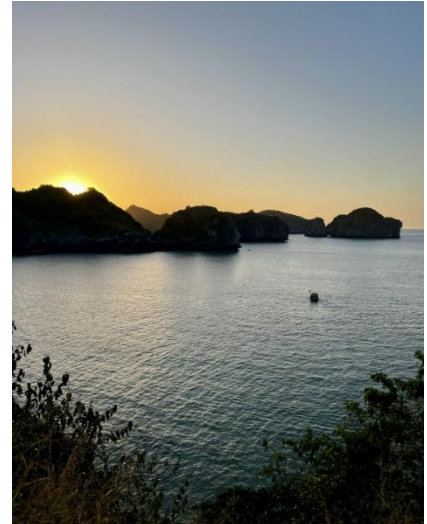
IAESTE Report - Teaching in Vietnam

Linus Hofstetter

International School of Thái Nguyên University (ISTNU)

Thái Nguyên City

September 2023 – January 2024



I decided to apply for an IAESTE internship very short notice and sent in my application a few hours before the deadline, but to send this application was one of the best decisions I've made so far.

Work

My first priority applying for internships was to work as a researcher in the Colombian Mountains, my second one – the one I got – was at Thái Nguyên University in Vietnam. The job description was extremely vague and mentioned a load of different tasks which somehow made the offer even more interesting to me. I ended up teaching English to first year computer science students and environmental science to students of all environmental science bachelors semesters. There were other IAESTE interns from all over the world at the same university and most of our main task was to teach English so if you apply at ISTNU, that's probably what you would end up doing too. I also did some work in an environment lab, testing wastewater samples for Iron II/III content, but there I could pretty much choose my working hours and I went there really rarely. It was very interesting to see how labwork practice is mostly the same, but differs a lot in some things from what we are used to here. Warning: There won't be lab goggles, and if you have shoes larger than size 40, you will struggle carrying acid around in tiny plastic slippers.



Dinner with other teachers in our dorm

Both my employer and IAESTE Vietnam (which consists of Ms. Huong and a few volunteers) were extremely nice and helpful throughout my entire stay, even when I stayed to travel a bit after my internship ended. Everything was super spontaneous and short notice, so being flexible and open to anything was very important. I spent many hours confused at random big events we were told about the same day they were set, but loved to just go along for the ride. The best thing you can do is say yes to all (trustworthy) invitations you get, even if you have no idea what's going to happen (You will get loads of those).

Living abroad

I tried as many different dishes as i could and my fear of bad streetfood vanished on day one. I did get foodpoisoning once, but it was worth it for sure. Another thing I was scared of at first was the traffic. I don't have a driverslicense, so I asked a local friend I made, if he knew a place where I could rent a bicycle. He ended up buying himself a brand new one and borrowing it to me for my entire time in Thái Nguyên! After I got used to the traffic I also rented motorbikes more and more, its really hart to get places without one sadly.

There are many things you'll do in the beginning, that are considered impolite, but you'll catch on pretty quickly. If you are a foreigner, the vietnamese will probably just laugh at you if you "misbehave", but they love when you learn to act in their ways. Something you will have to expect to do, is regularly drinking some rice wine shots for lunch and shaking hands after each one.

Next to my internship i volunteered in some english centers around Thái Nguyên (Pic below) and at the local German school. The head of the german school even offered a two year contract to me and a german colleague of mine. If you like to do something next to your work you'll get lots of opportunities to join a variety of different clubs. Just talk to people, they'll be happy to let you join or help you out. The vietnamese proudly think of themselves as friendly people and i wholeheartedly support that claim!

After my internship i spent one month travelling around Vietnam. Something I noticed, is that the more tourists there are, the less (overly) kind you will be treated by locals. I highly recommend learning some basic vietnamese, it regained me a lot of the openness and lead to many super interresting interactions. Learning to count will also let you buy stuff for a lot cheaper than if you bargain in english ;)

